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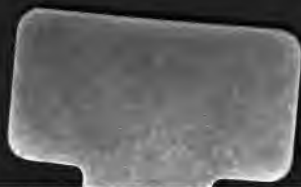
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ALL IN ALL.

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.



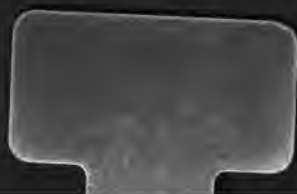
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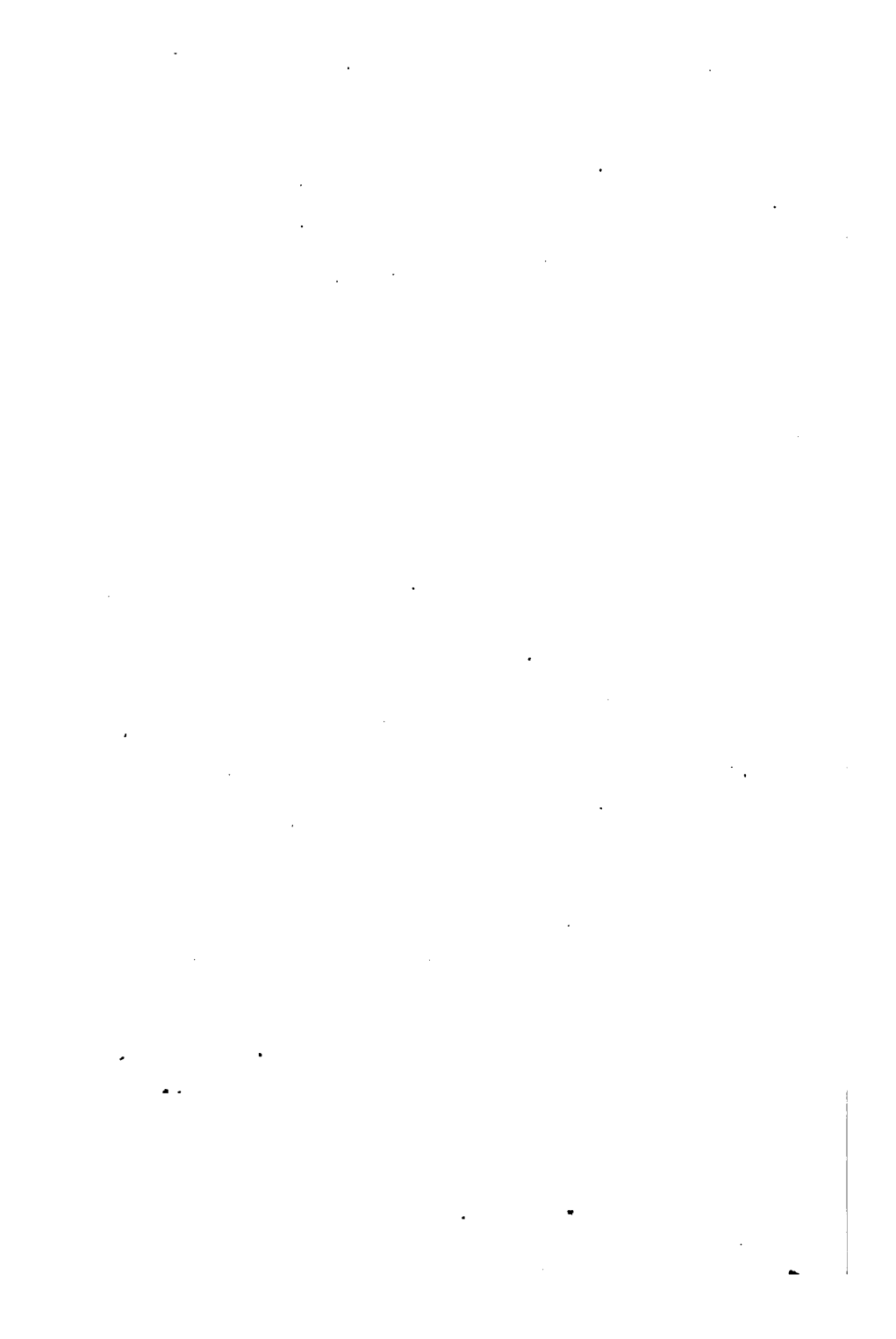






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BY PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

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ALL IN ALL:

POEMS AND SONNETS,

BY

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON,

AUTHOR OF "SONG-TIDE," AND OTHER POEMS.



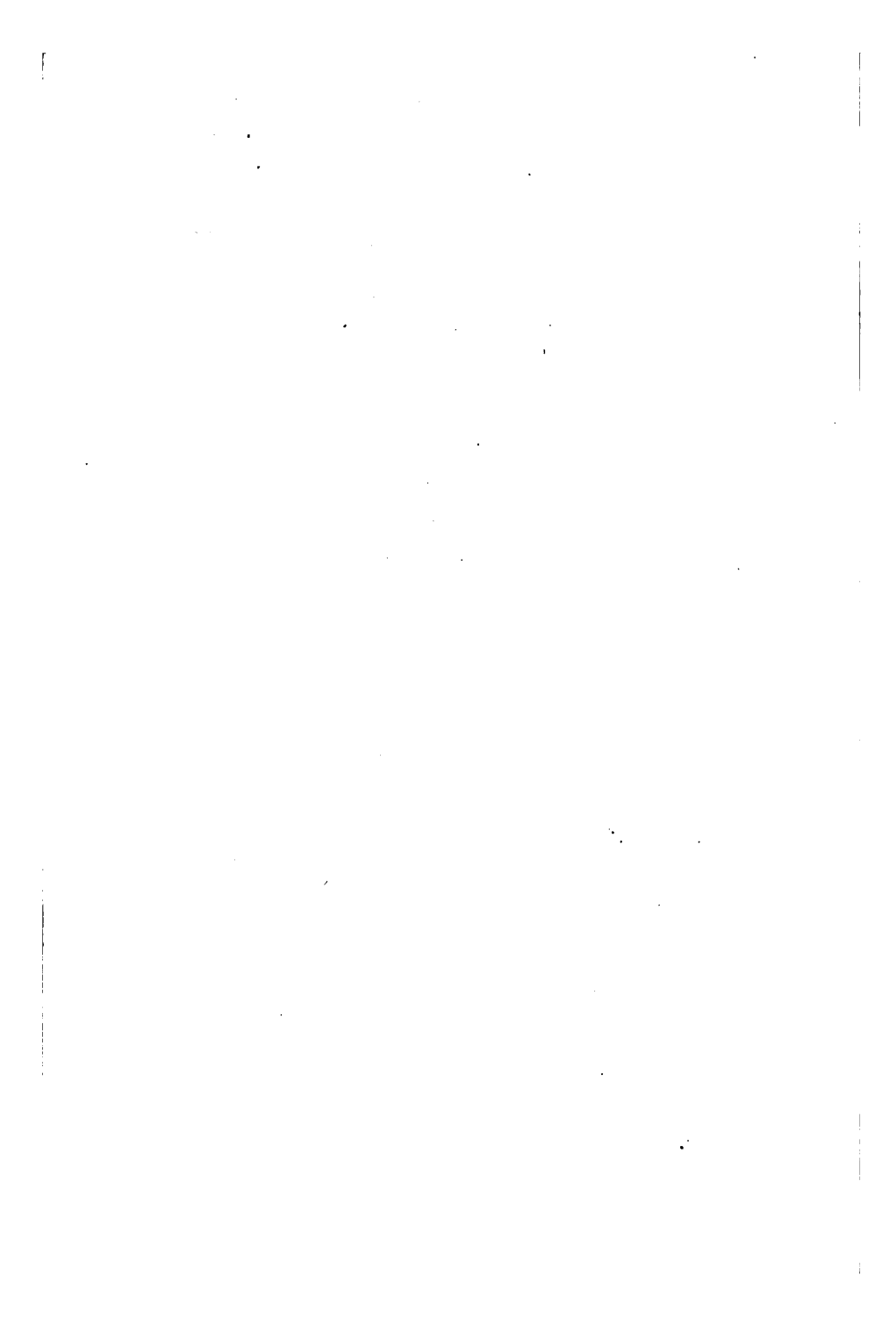
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1875.

280. j. 427.

TO
MY FATHER,
WITH PROFOUNDTEST LOVE AND ADMIRATION,
I Dedicate
THIS MY SECOND BOOK.



PREFACE.

IN that portion of my previous book called *Song-tide*, consisting of a prelude and fifty-seven sonnets, I strove to depict an ordinary but bitter phase of Love by tracking, as well as I was able, through its dark and devious windings a heart which, loving passionately and with reason, had, for all, no hope of ever meeting with the response for which it yearned.

Constant to an intention formed some years since, of depicting love under various aspects, I show in the poems and sonnets of the present volume how the love, so longed for and despaired of, is at last vouchsafed with all attendant peace and blessedness, until the beloved one is withdrawn, and the mourner is left but a memory,

under the inspiration of which he still aspires to some great and far-off good; but is met at every turn by tempters who would mislead, and enemies who would drive back.

Thus much of explanation of the scope and artistic design of the book may be due alike to myself and my readers, who will thus see that the book, from the conception of it, must, to a great extent, be a sombre one.

I need only add that it forms a sequel to *Song-tide*; and that another division, to be entitled *A Pilgrimage*, will complete this series of Love-poems.

P. B. MARSTON.

LONDON, *November*, 1874.

CONTENTS.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Dedication | iii |
| Preface | v |
| POEMS :— | |
| Prelude | xiii |
| Inseparable | 1 |
| In the June Twilight | 4 |
| In the November Night | 7 |
| First Knowledge | 10 |
| SONNETS :— | |
| Love and Resurrection—I. | 15 |
| " " II. | 16 |
| Saving Love | 17 |
| Possible Meeting | 18 |
| Sad Songs Remembered | 19 |
| Love's Answer | 20 |
| A Day of Peace | 21 |
| The One Gift | 22 |
| Moveless Memories | 23 |
| Comfort in Absence | 24 |
| Preludes—I. | 25 |
| " II. | 26 |

| | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Preludes— III. | 27 |
| " IV. | 28 |
| " V. | 29 |
| " VI. | 30 |
| " VII. | 31 |
| " VIII. | 32 |
| Not Thou but I..... | 33 |
| Not Death, but Life..... | 34 |
| A Year Ago | 35 |
| Dreamless Life | 36 |
| Life in Memory..... | 37 |
| The Watchers | 38 |
| Love's Journey Unended..... | 39 |
| Lifeless Life | 40 |
| Foredoomed | 41 |
| Changed Music..... | 42 |
| Love's Ranges | 43 |
| To Love..... | 44 |
| Spring's Return..... | 45 |
| Weary Waiting | 46 |
| I Abide It | 47 |
| A Lost Chance | 48 |
| Too Late | 49 |
| Love Met by Death | 50 |
| The Soul's Yearning | 51 |
| How My Songs of Her Began | 52 |
| Beyond Recall | 53 |
| Vain Comfort | 54 |
| As Thou Wilt | 55 |
| An Invocation | 56 |
| Sad Dreams | 57 |
| The One Question | 58 |
| Rebuked of Love | 59 |
| The New Religion | 60 |

CONTENTS.

ix

| | PAGE |
|---------------------------|------|
| Fated ! | 61 |
| A Fair Thought | 62 |
| Divine Counsel | 63 |
| Bitter Possession | 64 |
| Unconfessed Worship | 65 |
| A Parable | 66 |
| A Lost Joy..... | 67 |
| Lethargy | 68 |
| An Unknown Tongue | 69 |
| The Dead Hope | 70 |
| Wedded Memories | 71 |
| Sad Memories | 72 |
| Deathward Ways | 73 |
| Was it for This? | 74 |
| Mistrust | 75 |
| A Message from Love | 76 |
| Love's Pre-vision | 77 |
| Sore Longing | 78 |
| Divine Possibility..... | 79 |
| Vain Dreams | 80 |
| Dead !..... | 81 |
| Grief's Aspects | 82 |
| Impossible Joy | 83 |
| A Parable | 84 |
| Thy Voice | 85 |
| Restless Sorrow | 86 |
| The Dark Way..... | 87 |
| Hidden Evil | 88 |
| Love's Words—I..... | 89 |
| " " II..... | 90 |
| The Strangers | 91 |
| Grief against Grief | 92 |
| In Heaven..... | 93 |
| Complete Sacrifice | 94 |

CONTENTS.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Fate | 95 |
| Unseen Worship | 96 |
| Prophetic Moments | 97 |
| Love's Birth-hour | 98 |
| Treasured Thoughts | 99 |
| Her Messengers | 100 |
| Wasted Spring | 101 |
| A Terrible Suggestion | 102 |
| Arrested Spring..... | 103 |
| Autumn Quiet | 104 |
| Prayer..... | 105 |
| The One Grace..... | 106 |
| Memory | 107 |
| Life and Death | 108 |
| June | 109 |
| What Profits It? | 110 |
| Vain Delay | 111 |
| Lethargic Sorrow | 112 |
| Desolate Love | 113 |
| By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them..... | 114 |
| The Two Temptations..... | 115 |
| Past and Present | 116 |
| The Right to Love | 117 |
| Affinities | 118 |
| Quantum Mutatus ! | 119 |
| Dreaming Love..... | 120 |
| Love and Death | 121 |
| Love's Servants..... | 122 |
| Love's Sufficiency | 123 |
| Dead Joys | 124 |
| The Higher Self | 125 |
| A Message for the Old Year | 126 |
| A Parable | 127 |
| Love and Sorrow | 128 |

CONTENTS.

xi

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Concerning the Next Book to be called "The Pilgrimage" | 129 |
| A Parable | 130 |
| Past Summer..... | 131 |
| Summer Twilight | 132 |
| The Bitterest..... | 133 |
| The Uttered Soul..... | 134 |
| Love's Quest | 135 |

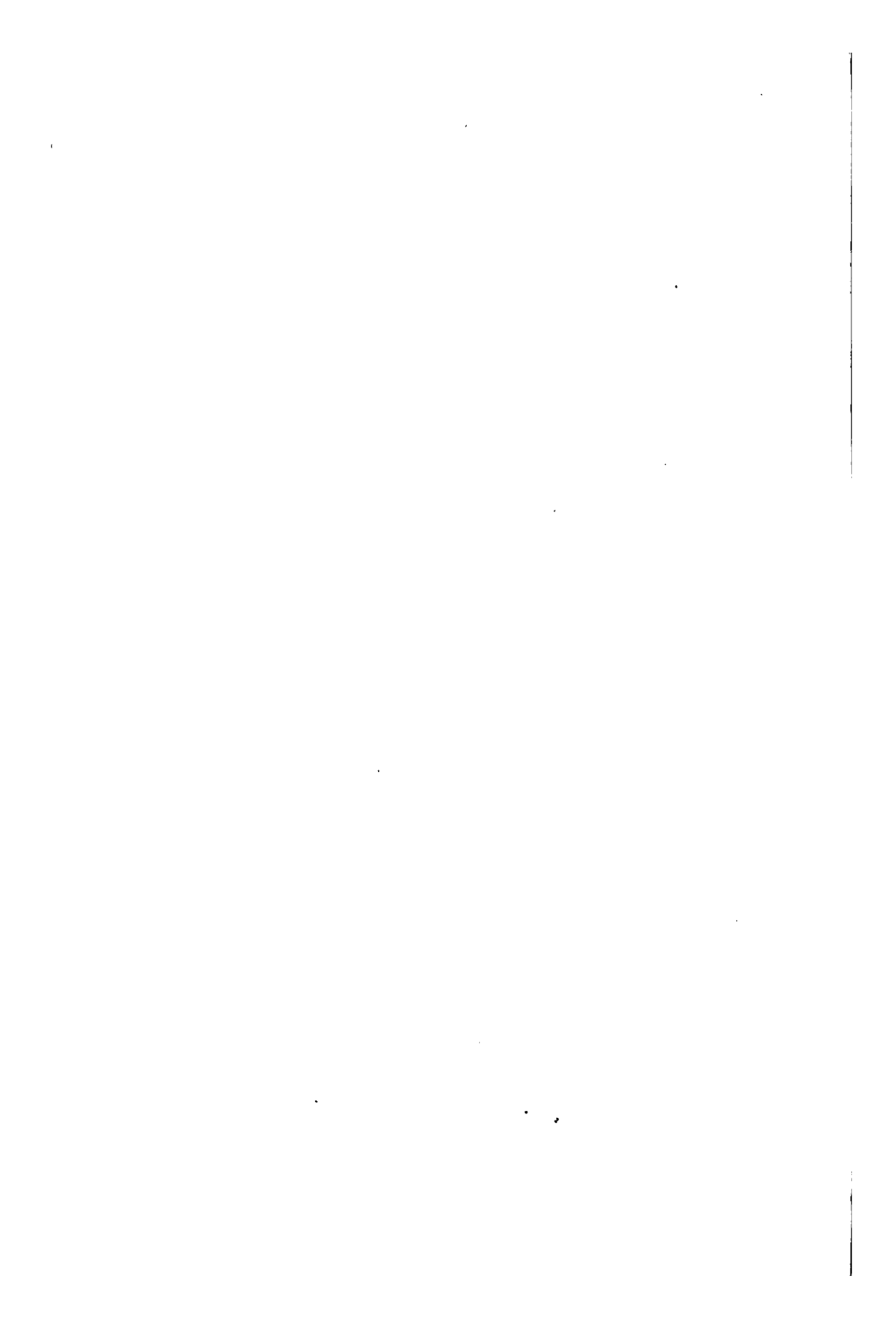
POEMS :—

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| And Thou Sleepest | 136 |
| After | 143 |
| De Profundis | 145 |
| Before Sleeping..... | 150 |
| Wasted | 152 |
| At a Window | 161 |
| Hope and Memory | 164 |
| The Season's Associations | 165 |
| A Dream | 167 |
| To Cicely Narney Marston | 173 |



PRELUDE.

Love and Bliss wedded in one heart of peace,
And offsprings of glad songs they had ; but lo !
Bliss sickened soon, and died ; then did Love know
For her was no more any joy or ease,
And Sorrow, coming after Joy's decease,
Laid hold of Love, and Love was linked to Woe ;
And where Love goes, there, too, must Sorrow go ;
And quite inseparable for life are these.
But, as Bliss brought to Love glad songs, so now,
See the sad offsprings of this second troth ;
Yet, as the mother, twice a wife, may trace
In children of both marriage-beds her face,
And knows the twain have sprung from her, even so,
Love sees her image equally in both.



P O E M S.

INSEPARABLE.

WHEN I and thou are dead, my dear,
The earth above us lain,
When we no more in autumn hear
The fall of leaves and rain,
Or round the snow-enshrouded year
The midnight winds complain.

When we no more in green mid-spring,
Its sights and sounds may mind ;
The warm wet leaves set quivering
With touches of the wind,
The birds at morn, and birds that sing,
When day is left behind.

When over all the moonlight lies,
Intensely bright and still ;
When some meandering brooklet sighs,
At parting from its hill ;
And scents from voiceless gardens rise,
The peaceful air to fill.

When we no more through summer light
The deep, dim woods discern,
Nor hear the nightingales at night,
In vehement singing, yearn
To stars and moon, that dumb and bright,
In nightly vigil burn.

When smiles, and hopes, and joys, and fears,
And words that lovers say ;
And sighs of love, and passionate tears
Are lost to us for aye,
What thing of all our love appears,
In cold and coffin'd clay ?

When all their kisses, sweet and close
Our lips shall quite forget ;

INSEPARABLE.

3

When, where the day upon us rose,
The day shall rise and set,
While we for love's sublime repose,
Shall have not one regret ;—

Oh, this true comfort is, I think,
That, be death near or far,
When we have crossed the fatal brink,
And found nor moon nor star—
To know not when in death we sink,
The lifeless things we are.

Yet one thought is, I deem, more kind,
That when we sleep so well,
On memories that we leave behind,
When kindred spirits dwell,
My name to thine, in words they'll bind,
Of love inseparable.

IN THE JUNE TWILIGHT.

IN the June twilight, starless and profound,
She sits : and of the twilight seems a part.
No birds sing now, nor is there any sound
Of wind among the leaves ; faintly you hear
The distant beating of the city's heart :
It doth not break the spell nor vex the ear,
But seems the silence yet to make more deep,
As though some giant whispered in his sleep.
Sometimes from little gardens lying round,
A voice calls through the evening ; or you catch
The sound of opening windows, or a latch
Rais'd stealthily beneath, by those who keep
Love's trists, that often are too bitter found.

And lo ! one sits beside her ; does she know
How the least tone of hers, the slightest noise
Of soft, stirr'd raiment sets his heart aglow ?
Yea, does she see how all the soul of him
Yearns to her in his look and in his voice ?
Their faces in the failing light are dim ;
And now to ease his heart a little space,
He tells her songs, that Love, with sovereign grace,
Has given him to sing of her ; that so,
When Time, grown weary, casts his soul away
As a thing wholly done with, men shall say—
“How this man loved, and she his verses praise :
Such women come not twice God's grace to show.”

And now he ceases ; and the common things
Of outer life go on : she does not move,
Her soul is full of mystic whisperings.
Is this heart hers, to do with as she wills ?
But men as well as women can feign love,
Or deem *that* love which time too quickly kills.
But has she kindled in this man the fire
That only with his being can expire ?

Was she more glad or sorry ? did she say,

“ This love but lives to die ? ”

And sit and watch the firelight fairies play

About the room, and sigh,

Because her heart's surprise still left unproved,

Whether she pitied more, or more she loved ?

Did she sit long that time with gold brown hair,

Shed over shoulders white,

Recalling each intense, unspoken prayer

Of his love-looks that night ?

Did she think over words of his, it seem'd

That she in some past life of hers had dream'd ?

Did she say smiling to herself, “ The song

He made then was of me ? ”

And as some rapt musician will prolong

The tune he plays, did she

Think of the days gone by, wherein her soul

But guess'd in part, what now it knew in whole ?

Did she recall the night they met on first ?

Wonder, if even then

Love as a revelation on him burst,

While lesser aims of men

IN THE NOVEMBER NIGHT.

I WONDER, when the moonless night had come
On that November day,
And the street's roar subsided to a hum,
While winds upon their way
Sang of the coming winter, and the rain
Drove drearily against the window-pane,

How felt she, knowing she was loved at length,
As men but love when young,
With all the untamed ardour and the strength
That overflow in song ;
When the whole spirit has no hope but one,
Which, quenched, it grows a sky without a sun.

10 *IN THE NOVEMBER NIGHT.*

She shut that love of his within her breast,
Apart from vulgar eyes ;

• Let those who will by look and voice attest
 Their lesser victories :

Whether she bade it live or turn to dust,
She kept his love as a most sacred trust.

FIRST KNOWLEDGE.

WHEN in sad sweetness and delicious dole
Love whispered her, "Thou lovest," did she start,
Confronted with that knowledge in her heart?
Or, did she pause to comprehend the whole
Deep meaning of Love's speech, and no word say?
As some musician who, about to play
The sweetest tune his cunning can essay,
Sits with still hands among the harp-chords lain,
Seeming to hearken with his heart and brain
Part of the music, ere it breaks and springs
From out the thrill'd, expectant, shuddering strings.

Did she think over love, of lovers dead,
And say, "Is such our love?" Did she recall
His steadfast look, his bitter sighs, and all
Sad words that at their parting he had said,

Not thinking he might ever call her his ?

Did she smile tenderly in saying this,

“ I, only I, can give to him the bliss,

For which he longs ; I can his life make fair,

By granting in this one his every prayer,

And love permits me now, his soul to save,

Yielding it all the love that it can crave ?”

Did she through summer twilight sit alone,

Marking with those intensely peaceful eyes

The sweet and gradual changing of the skies ?

And, as the birds stopped singing one by one,

And all the sounds of day in lapsing light

Grew silent, as the fast approaching night

Shadow'd the world in peace, before her sight

Did he rise visioned in her solitude ?

Ah ! surely at such peaceful hours he stood

Before her, and her spirit saw his face,

Bright with the peace of the approaching days !

Did she the coming time anticipate,

And murmur, “ Through the deep'ning twilight come,

O thou who lovest me, nor be thou dumb :

Call me again thy life, thy love, thy fate ;

Pour out thy love before me, let me see
The very passion of it filling thee ;
For so, ah, doubly blessed it shall be,
To answer, as I then shall make reply,
Oh, heart ! that thought to live unloved and die.
If love can bring thee heaven, ah ! surely then
Thou art no more unblest among men ?”

Ah, very sweet for such a soul as hers
It must have been to sit and think how soon
His clouded morn should grow to glorious noon :
For sure the crowning joy that love confers
On such high natures is the sense supreme,
Of being solely able to redeem
The heart beloved, fulfilling all its dream,
Making a sad life joyous, saying, “ Stand
Henceforth within the boundaries of Love’s land.”
Ah, doubtless then she carried in her breast
The double blessing of two hearts at rest.

Unworthy of her love he was, I know ;
He but a minstrel singing in the night,
Sad things and strange, unfitted for the light,
Made more for sombre shadows than the glow

Of perfect morn transfiguring the sky.
And if she heard from out the shade his cry
Of bitter singing, and, approaching nigh,
Said softly, "Can you sing no song to prove
The bliss as well as sorrow of great love?"
And made his heart to know, and lips to say,
How love has power to save as well as slay—

Yea, if her act were such and such her speech,
Is it for me to shame, with words ill said, -
The soul her soul from out the darkness led,
To set in open daylight, in the reach
Of winds and all sweet perfumes? Time shall prove
Whether or not he would have shamed her love.
Till then I pray you that we stand aloof;
For darkness hides her now, and she has done
With loving any underneath the sun :
And he, *he* waits 'mid shadows sad and strange,
Till grief to rest, and life to death shall change.

SONNETS.

LOVE AND RESURRECTION.

I.

WHEN a man dies and wakes in Paradise,
If Paradise there be—for what man knows?—
He hardly feels at first, how all his woes
Of life are over : but, with awe-struck eyes,
Looks where the towers and heights of heaven rise :
And as he looks, so great the glory grows,
That eyes, as yet not strong enough, must close,
While he in speechless expectation lies.
But through the golden gate he hears the song
The angels ever sing for joy of heart,
Yet dares not mix those shining forms among ;
Till lo ! Christ, stepping from the circling throng,
Says to him, “ Friend, why standest thou apart ?
Enter, for one of these thou surely art ! ”

LOVE AND RESURRECTION.

II.

So, when the joy, for which I long had prayed,
Was granted ; and Love's gates stood open wide,
With shining angels thronging either side,
I held a little back, with feet afraid
To dare the shining land before me spread ;
Though I had seen the faces glorified,
Heard too Love's song of joy ; felt all the pride
To know his very hands had crowned my head ;
While thus I stood, my lady came, and said,
" Come, now, and worship at Love's inmost shrine ;"
She spake with a compulsion so divine
That straightway I arose, and followed :
Now Love's continuous lights about us shine,
And by our voices is Love's anthem led.

SAVING LOVE.

I SAID, "Oh, thou who holdest in thy hand
 A rose-wreath'd lamp, whereof the mystic light
 Makes dim the floating glories of the night,
 Surely thou comest from some unknown land :
 Draw near and speak, that I may understand
 Thy will ; make weakness strong, make darkness bright."
 Then burn'd intenser glories on my sight,
 And unseen wings the quivering stillness fann'd,
 While a voice said, " Rise up, oh weary heart !
 Poor heart that died in a too bitter strife,
 I am the Resurrection and the Life !
 I am the Love, whereby redeem'd thou art."
 And then I knelt, and all love's light was shed
 About me as I knelt and worshippèd.

POSSIBLE MEETING.

ART thou afar or near, oh Royal Day—
 Thou Day that bring'st me to my love again ?
 Must the sweet autumn moon be in the wane,
 Before I feel thy breath, and hear thee say,
 " Behold thy love ?" or shall the skies be gray,
 Disturb'd by wind and sense of imminent rain,
 Before I hear thee cry, " Oh, not in vain
 Thou didst beseech my coming in thy lay ?"
 Or shall the leaden winter be begun,
 And all the sky forsaken of the sun ?
 Let this be as it may, my thoughts outrun
 The dull and hostile days that intervene ;
 They shall not bar thee, conqueror and queen,
 But be thy guards when thou dost crown'd pass in.

SAD SONGS REMEMBERED.

Nor of my lady be this once my lay, .

But of my songs of her be this my song ;

My songs, that stood a strange and unseen throng
About my spirit, ready to obey

The words that grief and love might have to say.

In this one, all the pain of hope found tongue ;

To this I said, " Go forth ! and be thou strong,
Some pity of my lady's soul to pray."

And now, poor songs, that they have done their best,
Though weak their wings might be my love to bear,

Now that Joy's regal foot is on the stair

That Grief so often trod in long unrest ;
I will not these my faithful songs despise,
But look on them with reverential eyes.

LOVE'S ANSWER.

I SAID to Love, "Lo, one thing troubles me !
How shall I show the way in which I love ?
Is any word, or look, or kiss enough
To show to her my love's extremity ?
What is there I can say, or do, that she
May know the strength and utter depth thereof ?
For words are weak, such love as mine to prove,
Though I should pour them forth unceasingly."
Then fell Love's smile upon me, as he said,
"Thou art a child in love, not knowing this ;
That could she know thy love by word or kiss,
Or gauge it by its show, 'twere all but dead :
For not by bounds, but shoreless distances,
Full knowledge of the sea is compassèd."

A DAY OF PEACE.

BECAUSE the time was autumn, and the day
Serenely sad as trusting souls may grow,
That, having borne the utterness of woe,
Take faith in God, for help upon their way,
And no more weep, but live, and watch, and pray ;
Because the warm moist wind blew faint and low,
Seeming the secret of my heart to know,
While birds sang softly through the tender gray ;
Because of these, my heart was glad forsooth ;
But only glad thereof, because my love
With hands in mine, and sweet face, hung above,
Said, as my kiss receded from her mouth,
The words that give my spirit strength to rest,
Till Love's full glory be made manifest.

THE ONE GIFT.

AND can I give thee nothing, oh, my queen ?
Have I no gifts to cast down at thy feet,
No crown, which for thy wearing might be meet ?
Yet, when thy hand my hands I take between,
When round my neck thy arms encircling lean,
When 'neath thy quickening kiss, prolonged and sweet,
My heart, on fire, seems audibly to beat,
And yearn to thine so distant and serene,
I feel that it is better as it is ;
Better that all the glory should be thine,
Than I indeed should give thee bliss for bliss.
While things are thus, *one* gift may yet be mine,
But couldst thou love me once as I love thee,
Giftless indeed, beloved, I should be.

MOVELESS MEMORIES.

Blow, autumn wind of this tempestuous night !
Roar through this garden, and bear down these trees ;
Surely to-night thy voice is as the seas,
And all my heart exultant in thy might !
Lo ! thou wast up before the morning light,
And in the darkness thou dost take no ease ;
But ever thy wild clamour doth increase,
As through thy waves the nightbirds wing their flight ;
Roar thyself hoarse, thy rage is all in vain,
Thou canst not from this garden, or this grove,
Drive forth the undying memories of love,
Nor hush at all the sweet mysterious strain
They sing, who never into sleep descend,
But keep perpetual vigil to the end.

COMFORT IN ABSENCE.

OH, love, remember when between us lies
 The bitter, barren sea, the dreary land,
 How utterly alone I then shall stand.
 Lo ! not with thine, but with my sadder eyes,
 Look thou upon the cold, unpitying skies,
 Or, when glad birds beneath thy window band,
 As when we, silent, sitting hand in hand,
 Watch'd the gray windless autumn morning rise.
 Since I would have my soul still beat in thine,
 Be sad for me, and in thy spirit say,
 "How dark for him, and desolate this day,
 From gray beginning, unto gray decline."
 So I shall gather strength, to go my way,
 Feeling thy soul compassionating mine.

PRELUDES.

I.

OH, ye whose hearts on happy things are set,
 Ye lovers who love well and have no fear,
 Come ye no further, do not enter here ;
 This is the land where Love and Death are met—
 A land ye may not easily forget,
 Once having been in ; when your eyes see clear,
 Oh, lover, into hers, and lips draw near
 And kisses multiply, and lids shine wet,
 'Twere ill if visions of this land should rise
 Between you, overshadowing your bliss ;
 Live on and love, nor think each time ye kiss
 This kiss may be the last—for all joy dies !
 Think not on death, lest so love's peace ye miss,
 Wasting your breath in unavailing sighs.

II.

WILL ye come in, and sit in this dark house ?
'Twere better far, I think, for ye to go
Where blackbirds sing and early violets blow,
And watch Spring dawning in the fields and boughs.
Here, with pale wreaths around their blanched, cold brows,
Lie dead the days, whereof ye nothing know.
Ye say the dead are harmless ; is it so ?
Nay ; uncompassionating Death allows
The ghosts of their dead selves to come again,
And, if ye tarry, ye will see them rise—
Dim shapes intangible that wax and wane.
Some gaze with pleading, some with wrathful eyes,
Mere ghosts, ye say ; yet go before ye cry,
“ We have seen the immortal faces and we die ! ”

III.

UPBRAID me not, oh world, that I forbear
 To make this song of mine a sword to smite
 The wrongs of nations and defend the right ;
Nor that I fail, through some remoter air,
To follow proud philosophy, even where
 Through soundless skies she tracks the lonely height.
 You say the world's in darkness ; in the fight
Of creeds conflicting bid me take my share.
 I think I am no coward, but I say,
Strive for the right you love so ; quell the wrong.
 I cannot rise and join you in the fray ;
All I can give you would not be for long,
 And might avail you nothing ; go your way !
The grief that weds my soul requires my song.

IV.

As looking on a river that progresses
Through some loud, populous city, till it gains
The acrid sea—thought tracks it through the plains
O'er which it flowed, to innermost recesses
Of hills the earliest light of morn caresses,
Where, nursed by Nature, fed by fragrant rains,
Sung to by birds, swayed by all varying strains
Of winds the very soul of spring possesses,
It sprang a slender stream, which, gath'ring force,
Grew to a river hurrying to the sea ;
So, on this current of my song look ye.
Think not upon its dark unalterable course,
Nor of drowned hopes that in its eddies be ;
But dream ye know and wander near its source.

v.

NOR as who gives to some belovèd one,
Some dear belovèd one whose altered eyes
May not the face above them recognise,
The roses he has taken from the sun
To deck her cold sweet body, saying, "None
Shall give thee gifts hereafter,"—one rose lies
Upon the breast that doth not sink or rise,
And in the hand whose pressures are all done
Another rests,—not so to thee, my love,
Give I these songs of thee ; I do but give
Because I love and for thy memory live ;
As swaying pines, that winds to dirges move,
Give to the winds again what the winds have given,
Give I these songs to thee, my life and my heaven."

VI.

I SAID to you my songs in other days,
Go forth ! and say now in my lady's ear,
"From love's intense and stormy atmosphere
Our life is given. Where fierce passions blaze,
And great despair through the soul's echoing ways
Rolls thunder-like, we circle : but are here,
To say the storm shall cease, the heavens clear,
If so thou wilt, and pity in thy grace."
And as men read, the Saviour of mankind,
When His disciples in their hour of dread,
Called on Him, rose, and quell'd the waves and wind ;
So, at her answer all the tempest fled,
And love's high heaven was filled from end to end
With light no lesser heavens can apprehend.

VII.

AND yet again I said, "Go forth, and see !
Your tones are glad and solemn as the strains
To which men worship in their holiest fanes.—
Proclaim the glory of the days to be,
When Love himself, in sovereign minstrelsy,
From lands where he, invisible godhead, reigns,
Shall wake that lordlier music which sustains
All souls to look on his divinity."
Oh songs ! my songs, did I not bid ye say,
"Pardon, oh queen, wherein we failed to show
The bliss that turns his night to glorious day ?"
So did ye say, my songs ; and well I know
She took your singing voices to be part
Of the diviner music of her heart.

VIII.

Go down, my songs, now to the land unknown,
The starless kingdom that has Death for king.
About the silent porches close and cling.
Through breezeless air, where bird hath never flown,
Or waste, gray fields, wherein no flower hath blown,
Hills from whose barren bosom wells no spring,
Let your tones rise, and die in echoing ;
And by their sadness let my love be shown.
Then, like the echo lasting, it may be
A voice shall answer ; but if otherwise,
Cease not ! nor strive to solve Death's mystery,
For she may hear you, though no voice replies.
Go then ! and say, " He follows in our wake,
Who bade us hasten here for his love's sake."

NO! THOU BUT I.

It must have been for one of us, my own,
To drink this cup and eat this bitter bread.
Had not my tears upon thy face been shed,
Thy tears had dropped on mine ; if I alone
Did not walk now, thy spirit would have known
My loneliness, and did my feet not tread
This weary path and steep, thy feet had bled
For mine, and thy mouth had for mine made moan ;
And so it comforts me, yea, not in vain,
To think of thy eternity of sleep,
To know thine eyes are tearless though mine weep :
And when this cup's last bitterness I drain,
One thought shall still its primal sweetness keep—
Thou hadst the peace and I the undying pain.

NOT DEATH, BUT LIFE.

I AM not dead, beloved, would I were !

My spirit has not ceased to beat with thine ;

Only my hope is dead ; and peace divine

Lies dead upon Hope's tomb, while black Despair,

Repeating ever an unanswered prayer,

Gives me to drink his sacramental wine,

And sacramental bread to eat, in sign

That I am his till death, his robes to bear.

I am not dead ! I have not died with thee.

This is no sleep, perpetual as time.

Dead lips are mute, and dead eyes cannot see

Pale memories and half-dreamed dreams of bliss ;

Dead feet have rest, but living feet must climb

The steep, round which the eternal darkness is.

A YEAR AGO.

A YEAR ago, beloved ! Who shall say
 What smiles and tears were ours a year ago ?
 Last year my heart was fain its love to show ;
 Then had I songs to sing and prayers to pray,
 And dreams to dream in dawns and twilights gray ;
 Dreams of love's heaven that I came to know
 For passionate realities ; and lo !
 Realities turn back to dreams to-day.
 Oh thou, my love, my saviour, living yet,
 I stand with folded hands before the gates ;
 Dark doors, whereof Death hath alone the key.
 So, with strained ear to iron gratings set,
 His term of bondage spent, some prisoner waits
 The word that, long delayed, shall make him free.

DREAMLESS LIFE

I HAVE a work to do, which, being done,
I will go out from men, and sit apart,
And give myself up wholly to my heart.
The winds, the moon, the ocean, and the sun,
And all the rain-vexed streams in spring that run
To rest in the broad rivers, birds that start
The fields with sudden singing, as they dart
Through eve aglow with fire, or dawns begun ;—
These shall my hidden thoughts interpret right.
So, when I walk far off from any strife,
Folded in quiet of sequestered life,
Through some pale autumn evening's lessening light,
My soul may catch her voice, discern her face,
And, yearning, lapse in rapture of embrace.

LIFE IN MEMORY.

As when two lovers in one room have been
Alone together for a rapturous space,
Hand lock'd in hand, face resting against face,
She says, " Farewell !" and, gone, the man, unseen,
Tarries behind, where sat with him his queen ;
There, of her love recalling all the grace,
His arms her quivering body re-embrace :
Once more, his lips upon her dear lips lean—
So in the past, left lovely from thy love,
Lit by sad lights of memories that shine,
Holy as lamps that burn before a shrine,
My spirit from the whole world stands aloof ;
Yea, and shall dwell so, till Death takes it where
No grief is bitter and no memory fair.

THE WATCHERS.

HERE in this room there is no light of day,
Only dim light of funeral lamps is shed
Upon my past, that lies here still and dead,
Only love hears the words I have to say,
Only he, watching, sees the gifts I lay,
Sad gifts, indeed, upon the silent bed.
Down distant passages I hear the tread
Of feet that from this chamber keep away.
Here sit we, I and Love, and keep one troth ;
Nor will I quit my sacred past at all,
Till Death in his good time my name shall call,
Then shall one equal darkness cover both ;
Then of this chamber shall Love seal the door,
That, being closed, shall open never more.

LOVE'S JOURNEY UNENDED.

HUSH'D is this place, where now to live seems best,
Here in Love's journey came we, she and I ;
Beyond me wind the dim, sweet paths, whereby
Of love's high hill we should have gain'd the crest.
Here, something weary, did she stop to rest,
But grew more weary, till with one deep sigh,
One kiss that seem'd of a dumb grief the cry,
We parted, and deep sleep her soul possess'd.
The paths at end of which Love's temples shine,
Glad feet of other lovers may essay ;
But, as they singing, pass me on their way,
Who place sad songs for flowers upon a shrine,
Let them not ask how long waits he, and why,
Lest sadder they should go for the reply.

LIFELESS LIFE.

SINCE we, for the last time, "good-bye" have said,
 Since I may never hold thy hands again,
 And prayers are useless, and all tears are vain,
What do I hear, when round thy soul are spread
Silence and sleep, and on my spirit shed
 The bitter, uncompassionating pain,
 Till my heart yearns for rest, as earth for rain,
When by the utter sun discomfited?
 So, a blind man within some storied hall
May hear men round him press, and one voice praise
The deep enchantment of a pictured face,
 One this sheer stretch of sea, and one the fall
Of April sunlight on some green wet place,
 While *he* stands sightless between wall and wall.

FOREDOOMED.

No star upon thy course sheds any ray ;
 Though thy bark bear for years the wind and foam,
 To no sweet haven shall it ever come.
The night shall see thee drifting, and the day
Behold thee as the night ; thou shalt not pray,
 Nor utter any cry, but, cold and dumb,
 Watch the waves pass, and glad ships sailing home
Shall hail thee not upon thy trackless way.
The salt wave shall taste bitter to thy lip :
 Weary, yea, unto death, thy soul shall be
 Of winds, and the interminable sea,
That does not bring thee nearer any goal,
But sweeps through changeless gloom the fated ship
To its remote, inevitable shoal.

CHANGED MUSIC.

WHEN I and she I loved walked side by side,
With love beneath, around us, and above ;
I made her songs, whereof the soul was love.
My happier songs flowed to her as a tide
That shoreward sets when angry waves subside ;
And sweet it was to feel her life should move
To music of my making, sweet enough
To please her heart, and leave it satisfied.
And now, if she, remote from griefs and joys
(Mid fields forlorn no reapers come to reap),
Should catch this sadder music, she would seem
Like one who, fallen to glad strains asleep,
And waking, as it were, from some long dream,
Finds the song changed indeed, but not the voice.

LOVE'S RANGES.

NOR merely the sweet words that she has said,
Not merely the too long unnoticed place,
Transfigur'd by the presence of her grace,
Least things she touch'd, least poem that she read,
Or any soul on which her love was shed,
Are dear to me, through love that in such ways
Brings round me ghosts of buried nights and days
That watch, what time I sleep, about my bed ;
But places that her eyes (not mine) have known,
Wherethro' her feet have wander'd many a time,
Have in their names a music not their own.
And now she makes her home in that far clime,
Whereof the name is Death, is it not meet
That I should find that name of all most sweet ?

DREAMLESS LIFE

I HAVE a work to do, which, being done,
I will go out from men, and sit apart,
And give myself up wholly to my heart.
The winds, the moon, the ocean, and the sun,
And all the rain-vexed streams in spring that run
To rest in the broad rivers, birds that start
The fields with sudden singing, as they dart
Through eve aglow with fire, or dawns begun ;—
These shall my hidden thoughts interpret right.
So, when I walk far off from any strife,
Folded in quiet of sequestered life,
Through some pale autumn evening's lessening light,
My soul may catch her voice, discern her face,
And, yearning, lapse in rapture of embrace.

SPRING'S RETURN.

A VOICE within me said, "Is not Spring fair?
Is not the light she moves in very sweet?
Sweet all the flowers that rise beneath her feet;
The songs of newly-mated birds that wear
Fresh plumage on their breasts; the lucid air
Wherein wild scents ecstatically meet,
Laughter of winds and waters, pulse and beat
Of Nature's heart? Hast thou in these no share?"
And I made answer, saying thus, "The bride
Clothed in fair raiment, in her maiden's sight
Looks fair to all, except that desolate one
Whose love upon the eve of wedding died."
She finds more fair the grave, sequester'd nun,
Seeing for both shall be no marriage night."

WEARY WAITING.

UNTO myself I say, "I am alone !

Upon the bounds of further life I stand."

I have passed very swiftly through Love's land ;

But I have seen it, even I have known

The bliss of calling one beloved my own :

And now, before my time upon the strand

Of the pale sea, with Sorrow hand in hand,

I wait until the weary time be done.

No boat as yet is at the water's side

To bear me over ; all its solitude

My heart might bear with, but a multitude

Of ghastly memories track me to the tide ;

They sing, they weep, they sob with passionate breath,

"Love lies behind thee, and beyond is death !"

I ABIDE IT.

Love, I abide it, come to me what may
When this my life is done whose tides now fall
"Twixt shores wherefrom pale memories lean and call
On some sweet night or dead, delicious day.
And as a gray sky makes the whole sea gray,
So, 'neath this vast, impenetrable pall
Of hopeless sorrow reaching over all,
My life rolls on its unbeholden way.
Whether thou wilt in death dispel this pain,
And give me sleep instead, or cry, "Arise !
Prepare to meet her lips, her voice, her eyes,"
I cannot tell ; such things with thee remain,
According to thy will, which, though thou hide it,
I question not, but living, I abide it.

A LOST CHANCE.

WHEN side by side we watched the darkening sky,

With love-lit faces, leaning each to each,

My lady stirr'd with low, impassion'd speech

The silence, saying, "If we now could die,

Both loving so, were 't not well?" but I,

Who deemed of fairer heavens within my reach,

Said, "Nay, not yet, for Love hath still to teach

Us sweeter secrets ere we put life by."

But she, who saw our souls clothed in such peace

As wraps the hills at sunset, turned her face.

Ah, God! if we had made that thought our prayer,

It might have been that, kneeling at her knees,

My lips on hers, Death had made answer there,

And bound us in the bonds of our embrace.

TOO LATE.

Love has its morn, its noon, its eve, and night.

We never had the noontide, never knew
The deep, intense, illimitable blue
Of fervid, mid-day heavens, making bright
With princely liberality of light

Waters the water-lily trembles through ;
But, in the evening's shadow did we two
Set out to gain Love's farthest, fairest height.

O love ! too late, too late for this we met ;
The goal was near, the nightfall nearer yet.

One star of Memory lightens in our track,
And all the rest is dark ; I will go back—
Back to the paths we walked in, and there stay,
Until I change them for the silent way.

LOVE MET BY DEATH.

LOVE put our hands together, saying this,
 "Follow my steps, and I will bring thy feet
 Through paths that more than summer maketh sweet,
Unto the lordliest of my palaces ;
 There will I fill ye full of fiery bliss ;
There, in deep groves and gardens shall ye meet,
And, through mysterious twilights, to the beat
 Of mystic music find it good to kiss."
But even, while we follow'd in his track,
 A dark form came between us ; then it was
 I felt her turn from me, and watch'd her pass
To the dark country whence no soul comes back.
 Now where our paths diverge, I stand, I wait,
 Till Death in sleep my life shall consummate.

THE SOUL'S YEARNING.

THOUGHTS of clasp'd hands and unrememb'ring eyes,
 White breathless lips and all the signs that show
 The weary soul at length has done with woe ;
 The silence after death, the peace that lies
 Upon the veiled lids of whoso dies—

These thoughts, that but a little while ago
 Seem'd sad and bitter, now most tender grow ;
 And sleep but hints what death can realize :

And yet, sometimes the soul, unsatisfied,
 Will cry, " When I for so long time have striven,
 Endured so much, and overcome so much,
 Shall no love clasp me on the deathward side?"

Such thoughts are hard to bear with, and yet such
 Point more, I think, than any creed to Heaven !

HOW MY SONGS OF HER BEGAN.

God made my lady lovely to behold ;
Above the painter's dream he set her face,
And wrought her body in divinest grace,
He touched the brown hair with a sense of gold,
And in the perfect form He did enfold
What was alone as perfect, the sweet heart ;
Knowledge most rare to her He did impart,
And filled with love and worship all her days.
And then God thought Him how it would be well
To give her music, and to Love He said,
"Bring thou some minstrel now that he may tell
How fair and sweet a thing My hands have made."
Then at Love's call I came, bowed down my head,
And at His will my lyre waxed audible.

BEYOND RECALL.

My soul that cannot serve her now at all,
I said is worthless ; she who made it fair,
Can have for it no longer any care.
Why should I keep it, I will let it fall,
Nor reck of where it lies ; and therewithal,
I fain had flung it from me in despair,
But a voice said within my heart, " Forbear !
Thy soul was hers, is hers beyond recall.
Is not the rose long dead, she wore an hour
Within her breast, kept by thee for her sake ?
Holds thy soul less of her than this poor rose ?"
" Thy speech," I said, " to all my spirit shows,
Of what it had been guilty ; I will take
My soul and keep it as I keep the flower."

VAIN COMFORT.

BECAUSE one voice is silent, and because
The world is poorer by one queenly face,
Wilt thou for this, say all my nights and days
Are altogether desolate ? Alas !
Gone joys what God shall bring again to pass ?
Lo ! Art stands near thee, live to gain her grace ;
To ultimate joy and peace, are many ways.
Thou yet shalt live to say of grief, it was.
Oh ! thou vain comforter, do men bereft
Of sight, and all the glory of the day,
In their first blindness, turn to what is left ?
Nay, rather the bird's songs through flowery May,
They hate ; divining from that rapturous mirth,
How lovely the precluded sights of Earth.

AS THOU WILT.

If she should come to me from far away,
How would she come? Should I upon some night,
Wake suddenly, and see a mystic light
Enshrining face and form, what would she say?
What sweet thing do? As in the old, dear way,
Would she bow over me, and first, with light
Sweet kisses, touch my brow; then as the might
Of love grew stronger, closer cling and lay
Her lips to mine, in one long passionate kiss?
Or would she kiss me not, but stand aloof,
And say, "Rise! work, without the aid of bliss,
Lest grief in time thy manhood should disprove?"
Kiss me, refrain, or chide me, oh my own,
But leave me not as now, alone! alone!!

THE ONE QUESTION.

THIS time last year we parted ; she and I.

“ The day of meeting soon will come,” we said ;

And hand in hand, unto the last we stayed :

Then, when to love no more might love reply,

Starless to both became the star-lit sky.

And now, that longer parting has been made,

And she, released from love, in sleep is laid,

I stand where she stood, having said, “ Good-bye.”

And as I come through paths she knew so well,

The winds cry out to me, “ Where is she now ?

What has Love done with her ? Speak thou, and tell.”

“ Where is she ?” moans the streamlet in its flow.

“ Where, where is all thou lovest ?” fills the air ;

And I, O God ! I can but echo, “ Where ?”

REBUKED OF LOVE.

SOMETIMES, I think Love doth my heart rebuke.

I fancy that he calls to me and says,

“What right hast thou to grieve? Go, hide thy face!

Say, wert thou worthy in her eyes to look,

Thou, whom God cursed, and even I forsook,

Till she reclaimed thee, and transformed thy days?

Say, hath she touched thee, hath one seen her gaze

Upon thee tenderly? Say, did she brook

Thy kiss upon her mouth, thou wretched one?

Unworthy on thy knees to kiss the ground

Her feet had sanctified. Be still for shame!”

And I, I can but answer, if she found

Me fit for acceptation, I may claim,

Grief’s bitter privilege, to dwell alone.

THE NEW RELIGION.

THEY shall not be forgotten, these my lays ;
I know that they shall live when I am dead.
A thousand things I might have sung and said,
And no man hearkened to my blame or praise ;
I might have moved the veil from off the face
Of awful Destiny ; I might have spread
Rebellion through a land misused, and made
My song the weapon of an injured race,
And men forgotten all the same ; but now
I come among ye, and to each I cry,
“ He that hath ears to hearken, let him hear,”
I sing of love, made manifest in her.
I preach the Gospel of her life, and so
I feel these words, though mine, not born to die !

FATED !

STAND, fated house ! for evermore, alone,
Stand, 'mid thy barren gardens, wild, and swept
By winds that wailing through thy trees, have kept
The tune of grief. Be thou of joy unknown :
For in thy walls, now dank with oozing stone,
My lady turned her face from me and wept,
And gave me her last parting kiss, and slept
The sleep from which none wake to laugh or moan.
The summer misbecomes thee, oh, dread house !
Glad songs of birds sound alien in thy boughs ;
Death keeps thy doors, thy passages are full
Of ghosts that sorrow makes not beautiful.
Forlorn, barred, silent, keep thy secret well,
That none who pass may guess what thou could'st tell.

A FAIR THOUGHT.

'MID very many bitter thoughts, I found
A thought which seemed most gracious, and I said,
“ This thought shall prosper in the inner shade
Of being, where the wells of life abound.”
And so I plucked it from the common ground,
And set it where it should not be dismayed
By winds and scorching heats ; and near it laid
All sacred things which did my life surround.
“ And when it is,” I said, “ full grown and strong,
My chosen ones shall view it in its pride,
And I will fold its fragrance in a song.”
I left it in a quiet eventide,
Scarce breathing, lest my breath should do it wrong,
And yet because it was so frail, it died.

DIVINE COUNSEL.

AND if her soul has gained some place divine,
If even now she sits in heaven, and sees
All round her ranged its shining companies,
Has not God turned her heart from loving mine ?
Has He not said to her, " A soul like thine
Will find more sweet companionship in these
Who, being peaceful, know how sweet is peace,
Than in the offspring of a stormy line ?"
Yea, He has called that love of hers a sin,
And purged her of it, and that love is dead !
Thus, even if some place near her I win,
She will not say the things on Earth she said,
God having changed her heart to me ; and so,
What I have known I never more can know.

BITTER POSSESSION.

OUR raptures and our sorrows are our own,
Most false it is to say we sympathize ;
What man can see as with another's eyes ?
The song of one man drowns another's moan ;
A man in sorrow always is alone !
He pours his heart out 'neath unpitying skies,
And tells his trouble to the night, and tries
To feel some message with the wind is blown :
He hath his anniversaries of woe,
He walks o'er verdure that hides death below,
He gives to no man, as he takes from none.
The life he lives, none hinder or control ;
Only the hearts of lovers beat as one,
For theirs is knowledge, absolute and whole.

UNCONFESSED WORSHIP.

You worship God ; I fail to recognize
In aught the God you worship, but I see
How broken-hearted you wait patiently
Upon His will, and deem that He replies
In mercy to your sharp and passionate cries.
You worship Art, a fair divinity ;
And you, your God is holy Liberty ;
Enduring as the ocean and the skies :
And all the worship of my soul is given
To her, whose life these songs commemorate.
Yet, if indeed, there should be God and heaven ;
By loving solely what is pure and great—
All that we deem in life is loveliest,
Is not all worship His, though unconfessed ?

A PARABLE.

THERE was a certain man who thought to raise

A temple reaching well-nigh to the skies ;

And well, indeed, his plans he did devise,

And solidly and firmly wrought the base,

And worked with a brave heart for many days.

And when the walls to a great height did rise,

Fair things he put therein, and with proud eyes

Watched men in wonder on the structure gaze.

"Surely the gods," he said, "my labours bless."

And higher still, and higher did he build,

The temple with pure images he filled,

When, lo ! it reeled ; and, crushed beneath the press

Of tottering walls and towers, *he* buried fell !

Yet, do I think he planned, and builded well.

A LOST JOY.

A MAN, who having loved for many days,
Some woman gracious, goodly to behold,
With looks that all his yielding will controlled,
Love being dead, views with calm eyes her face,
Admiring, yet not thrilled, and sadly says,
“How is my heart to all this beauty cold,
Lasts there no charm my spirit to enfold?
Valueless now the long-desired embrace,”
When lo ! her face in the old, dear lovely way
She turns, and speaks ; and then his soul perceives
For what he loved her, though the love is dead ;
So, walking lonely, on one April day,
Noting the promise of unfolding leaves,
I thought as *he*, and as *he* says I said.

LETHARGY.

BEHOLD, Grief came, and stood against my bed,
And touched me with pure hands, and with calm eyes
Looked on my face, and said to me, "Arise !
And do Life's bitter work." Whereto, I said,
"Forbear a little ; she, my love, is dead,
And all the wretched life within me dies."
She passed, and then, with sweet voluptuous sighs,
A crown of shining roses on her head,
Came one most fair, and cried to me, "Awake !
Am I not fair, behold my lips and breast ?"
But she passed on, because no word I spake.
Then came a fiend, whose power my blood possessed,
And she the purpose of my life may shake ;
Yet on these two, Grief's likeness was impressed.

AN UNKNOWN TONGUE.

BECAUSE my life is dark and desolate,
Like some gray, uninhabitable land,
Which hears for ever on its wreck-strewn strand,
The roar of waves inimical as fate ;
Because I cry life's bitterest cry too late ;
Because pale Grief, with her relentless hand,
Leads me up paths most steep, until I stand
Alone before the shut and shadowy gate
Which opens once to each, and only once,
Would I make your lives sad, all ye who say
"Bright are the skies above, and fair the way,
Darkness may come, the present is the sun's !"
Love knows I would not ; fear not then my song,
I speak strange words ; ye know not yet the tongue.

THE DEAD HOPE.

THE mother who has lost her only child,
Thinking of all she should have been to her ;
What time strange voices in the breezes stir,
Sits in the Autumn twilight, gray and wild,
Remembering how the dead lips spoke and smiled.
And as she sits, her child full grown and fair,
Large eyed, with glory of up-gathered hair,
Comes in a vision exquisitely mild.
So, sometimes, as in dreams, *I* seem to see
That joy arisen to full height, that life,
That hope which died in shining infancy.
The mother yet may be a fruitful wife
And bear fresh children ; but for me there springs
No second hope from out the womb of things.

WEDDED MEMORIES.

AND if my memory live when I am dead,
 When all whereby men knew me turns to dust ;
 When deaf and dumb, and sightless, I am thrust
 Into dank darkness, where the worms are fed
 By Death's gaunt hand, that breed in my cold bed ;
 When I, at last, with life and love break trust ;
 When the soul's yearnings and the body's lust,
 Are ended wholly as a tune out-played ;
 If then, men name my name, and from these lays
 The depth and glory of thy soul divine,
 Shall not, beloved, my memory live in thine ?
 Our memories moveless 'mid the moving days,
 Intense and sad like changeless stars that shine
 On ruined towers of a predestined race.

SAD MEMORIES.

If two who love when I am gone from hence
To some far distant land across the seas,
Should in this room, possessed by memories,
Sit wrapt in love's calm, holy and intense,
Feeling their passionate kisses recompense
Their hearts for doubts and fears now lost in peace
That manifold embraces but increase,
Aware in all of Love's omnipotence—
Would they not, sitting silent, feel the weight
Of some unknown despair upon them press ?
Would they not taste the sorrow of our fate ?
Would not some black foreboding smite them there ?
Would they not feel and hear the tireless stress
Of phantom wings through the love-bewildered air ?

DEATHWARD WAYS.

ALL men and women walk by various ways
To Death's dark land ; and some with song and mirth
Beguile the time which lies 'twixt death and birth ;
Some, joyous and full blooded, through a maze
Of splendid passionate nights and dreamy days,
Gain soon their goal ; and some who find a dearth
Of joy in all, poor strangers on the earth,
Plod on their path, and yield nor prayer nor praise.
But, look you, I will walk with none of these,
I walk a straight and solitary path ;
A way which no sweet scent, or verdure hath,
And as I walk, like strong and rising seas,
I hear my whole past surging on my track,
And would return, yet never may go back.

WAS IT FOR THIS?

Was it for this we met three years ago ;
Took hands, spake low, sat side by side, and heard
The sleeping trees beneath us touched and stirred
By some mild twilight wind as soft as snow,
And with the sun's late kisses still aglow ?
Was it for this the end was so deferred ?
For this thy lips at length let through the word
That saved my soul, as all Love's angels know ?
Was it for this, that sweet word being said,
We kissed and clung together in our bliss,
And walked within Love's sunlight and Love's shade ?
Was it for this—to dwell henceforth apart,
One housed with death, and one with beggared heart ?
Nay, surely, love, it was for more than this.

MISTRUST.

I FELL before Love in my heart, and cried,
 " O Love, Love, Love, am I cast out from thee ?
 These, once that held me in captivity,
Rise up again about me on each side.
Have I so long their deadly charms defied,
 To fall now, heedless of my life to be ?
 Oh, Love ! dear lord, hast thou forsaken me ?
Dost thou thy face in sore displeasure hide ?"
 Then said a voice, " Thou dost me wrong, O son,
Thou art not fallen yet. Does not this prove
That thou art wholly mine, that I am Love,
 And I am with thee ? Of thyself alone,
What strength hadst thou to battle with their spell ?
I am thy sword, and buckler ; it is well !"

A MESSAGE FROM LOVE.

I do not come among you as Christ came,
To preach eternal life, for well I know,
The soul and body both one way must go.
But on my heart this message, as in flame,
Was written : Go thou forth now ! and proclaim
Love's glory, for the folk rebellious grow ;
My sacred images they overthrow,
And do blaspheme against my holy name.
Dante, and he who served with equal heart,
For love, the poet and the painter's art,
They make their jest of ; Love is dead, they say,
And other gods we worship in this day.
Better than love is lust ; love made men sad,
And we who labour, labour to be glad.

LOVE'S PRE-VISION.

No thought of me, I deemed, was in her soul
 When those sweet eyes, that did all eyes transcend
 In glory, saw Death waiting as a friend.
She heard no sound of Earth, no distant roll
Of bitter waters o'er a sunken shoal ;
 No raving of mad winds that break and bend,
 And hurry to its black and brackish end,
The ship, whose course no pilot may control.
 'Twas well : one thought of me had marred her rest,
 And made her soul, through pity, loath to go ;
She took my love, and wore it as a flower,
And, lest some thorn should wound her in that hour,
 Love took it gently, when, she did not know,
 And laid it after on the cold, sweet breast.

SORE LONGING.

My body is athirst for thee, my love ;
My lips, that may not meet thy lips again,
Are flowers that fail in drought for want of rain ;
My heart, without thy voice, is like a grove
Wherein no bird makes music, while, above
The twilight deepens as the low winds wane ;
My eyes, that ache for sight of thee in vain,
Are hidden streams no stars make mirrors of.
I see thee but in memory, alas !
So some worn seaman, restless in his sleep,
In time of danger, o'er the raging deep,
Sees visionary lights, and cries, "We pass
The prayed-for land ; reverse the helm, put back !"
And still the ship bears on her starless track.

DIVINE POSSIBILITY.

BECAUSE no man who lives can surely tell
What thing comes after death, each night and day,
Unheard of any but of Love, I say,
“ O Love, my lord and master, from the spell
Of bitter sweetnesses that end in Hell,
Keep thou my soul ; strange forms beset my way,
And as I pass, they whisper to me, ‘ Stay !
And rest with us, and life shall yet be well.’
So guide me, Love, that if, at end of all,
I should awake, and to my eyes be shown
Her face in heaven, and her voice should call,
My soul to her, that soul then free from stain,
Strengthen’d by love, and purified by pain,
May answer, and reclaim her for its own.”

VAIN DREAMS.

I AND my love are parted ; many days,
Sad days must be before we meet again ;
But surely we shall meet, and all the pain
Of separation die as we embrace,
When on her bosom lies again my face,
And lips dissevered reunite and strain
Together in a kiss that shall enchain
Our souls too much for any speech of praise.
And when at length we speak I think I know
Of what our speech shall be. Oh, vain my soul !
Put by these dreams, take up thy load and go ;
Each lot, however bitter, hath its goal.
Thy goal is death, not life, and when life ends
The night that hides thy love, on thee descends.

DEAD !

" DEAD, my beloved, what means this word ?" I say,
 Over and over, as I fain would wring
 Some hidden meaning from it ; let me bring
 My soul to comprehend it. Gone away !
 Asleep, to wake no more on any day ?
 Nay, not asleep, awake, and wandering
 Through lands of bloom in a continuous Spring !
 I seek for light, yet find no certain ray ;
 But this I know, again we shall not meet ;
 We never more shall sit as we have done,
 Breathless with love, in twilight hushed and sweet ;
 Upon no joy of ours shall set the sun ;
 Nor more nor less than this it means ; and yet,
 Can I remember so and thou forget ?

GRIEF'S ASPECTS.

GRIEF does not come alike to all, I know.

To some, grief cometh like an armed man,

Crying, "Arise ! and strive with me who can."

And some are brought to heavenly peace through woe,

And watch a new life from the old life grow.

And some there be who strive beneath the ban,

And, having struggled hotly for a span,

Tread on the fallen body of their foe.

My grief has taken hold of me, and led

My feet to lands of any spring unknown.

There has he bound me in strong chains, and said,

"Behold, we are for evermore alone !

Drink from my hand thy wine, and eat my bread

At last, I have thee solely for my own."

IMPOSSIBLE JOY.

WHAT of that place, my dearest, the far place
We should have seen together, planning so,
Before the Autumn's winds had strength to blow,
And Summer turn'd from us with lingering gaze,
As one who, parting, yet to go delays?—
Ah! very strange, it seems to me, to know
That seasons in that place still come and go,
Though we come not; if down the talked-of ways
My solitary steps are ever led,
I shall seem surely as some man new-wed,
Who finds the loved one absent from his side,
And seeing she returns not, opens wide
The bridal chamber, and bows down his head
Upon the couch where should have lain the bride.

HIDDEN EVIL.

I LOOKED where many flowers grew, and said :
 "The way I walk is barren, yea, and long ;
 Surely one hour of rest can be no wrong."
And so 'mid thickest of the grass I laid
My limbs, the flowers met above my head,
 And as I lay, half-eased, I heard a song,
 Which seemed to me a psalm, and then among
The flowers with even a halo round her shed,
 Came singing a fair woman with drooped eyes ;
Oh, perfect soul, she touched me where I lay ;
 She softened all my life's sad memories ;
 But even while she soothed me with her sighs,
A fiend possessed me, that I might not stay :
Her breast I bruised, then turned, and went my way.

THY VOICE.

Thy voice is in the sea's voice when it makes
A melancholy music to the beach.
Thy voice is in the winds when birds besiege
The twilight time with song. The stream that takes
Its way from out the hill by flowery brakes,
Has in its tones the sweetness of thy speech ;
At night, when all is still, and faint sounds reach
The ear of one who, having slept, awakes
Full of his dream, thy voice floats through the night
In music sad, as Autumn winds that blow
'Mid yellowing woods in the sun's waning light,
Compassionate, persistent, clear, and low.
And, when the world is fading out of sight,
Thy voice shall whisper peace, and bid me go.

RESTLESS SORROW.

I, ONCE who was of love insatiable,
And groaned, through sorrow humbled, I, who said
What time the hand so loved in mine was laid,
Give me the lips, and let my kiss compel
The answer that shall 'trance as with a spell.
My heart, which now through doubting is dismayed,
And when the prayer was granted that I prayed,
Still found fresh wants my spirit to impel,—
Should I, if she could come but once again
To me,—allowed to sit unseen, and hear
Her voice—ah ! say should I be satisfied,
Forbid to kiss, or even touch thee, dear ?
Oh ! mad, unreasoning heart, be still, and gain
Contentment, that thy prayer has been denied.

THE DARK WAY.

WHEN first I knew this trouble of my days,
This unrelenting grief, I was like one
Who, suddenly made blind, walks not alone,
Nor yet for any other guidance prays,
But silent sits, conjecturing of the ways
That he must walk, the perils he must shun,
Unaided by the light of star or sun ;
And as at length, with set and vacant gaze,
He rises, stumbles, stops, moves on again,
Trusting, withal, his feet a path have found,
Distinguishing the day from night, by sound ;
So I, through tortuous paths no light makes plain,
Having less even than the blind man's faith,
With outspread hands, grope my dark way to Death.

HIDDEN EVIL.

I LOOKED where many flowers grew, and said :
 "The way I walk is barren, yea, and long ;
 Surely one hour of rest can be no wrong."
And so 'mid thickest of the grass I laid
My limbs, the flowers met above my head,
 And as I lay, half-eased, I heard a song,
 Which seemed to me a psalm, and then among
The flowers with even a halo round her shed,
 Came singing a fair woman with drooped eyes ;
Oh, perfect soul, she touched me where I lay ;
 She softened all my life's sad memories ;
 But even while she soothed me with her sighs,
A fiend possessed me, that I might not stay :
Her breast I bruised, then turned, and went my way.

LOVE'S WORDS. '

I.

"A MAN will give his life for me," Love saith.

"His heart, and brain and body will I take ;
And if Fate wills so, for that man, will make
A pleasure house of life. Men shrink from death ;
Yet I by even a look, a tone, a breath,
Can make the death hour lovely for my sake.

All things for me, a lover will forsake,
And verily I will reward his faith ;

But if a man have sorrow at my hand,
If Death the life of all he loves destroys,
And he should seek for any other joys,

Or even consolation, I will brand
That man with shame, and utter with my voice,
The words that bid him from my sight and land."

LOVE'S WORDS.

II.

"THEREFORE, O son," Love saith to me, "be wise !

Think not thy sorrow how to mitigate ;

But rather, patient how to bear, and wait.

Thou hast loved well ; I treasure all thy sighs,

And hear thy prayers ; I cannot stay thine eyes

As yet from weeping, nor reverse the fate

That God hath sent on thee, nor stir the gate

That shuts her soul from thine, nor bid her rise

To tell thee that these words are words of truth.

But have thou faith, O son, believe in me,

And I will some day make the path more smooth

For treading of thy pierced, and weary feet.

It may be late or soon, but thou shalt see,

How sorrow borne for love, can make death sweet."

THE STRANGERS.

BECAUSE the time is Spring, when flowers should be,
The Strangers wander through my land and say,
"Surely some flower blossoms by the way.

The lands should now be bright with greenery,
And birds be choral in each flowering tree.

Is only this land blossomless in May?

Come, let us watch the first transforming ray
Of sudden light, that makes it fair to see."

They know the atmosphere they breathe is chill ;

The gray wood songless, and the meadow still,
No exultation of Spring's life ; and so

They say Spring's sweetness is not yet begun.

Alas ! alas ! how little do they know, :

The Spring-time, and the Summer, both are done.

GRIEF AGAINST GRIEF.

BETTER, my love, than this to love in vain,
To feel what time my heart was sad for love,
Thy soul unpitying stand from mine aloof ;
Better to bear the torment, and the pain,
Of lips that from all worship must refrain,
So I might feel thy sweetness near me move ;
Touch thee, and see thee, find some way to prove
That souls can love, themselves not loved again.
But thus to sit without thee, and to know,
No grief the past can ever recreate,
To seek, and not to find thee ; to awake,
And face the haggard day that can bestow
No gift of love ; these are such griefs as make
Man feel he is but man, while fate is fate.

IN HEAVEN.

My lady sits at Beatrice's feet,
Holding her hands, and gazing in her eyes,
Breathing against her bosom all her sighs
For one, who doth by day, and night, repeat
Her name he finds so sad, yet finds so sweet.
And she in her Italian voice replies,
"Nay, sister, have no fear, Love never dies !
And Love will lead him here, and ye shall meet."
I know when Dante in his lady's ear,
Murmurs his last sweet lay of her, my love
Sits silent, thinking of a bygone year,
When one, so speaking, sought her heart to move.
Then Beatrice understands, and bows,
And kisses tenderly her lips and brows.

COMPLETE SACRIFICE.

I DO not ask thee, Love, to make life sweet ;
All thou hast lain upon me I must bear :
Nor do I ask again for any share
In things I once held dear ; but when I meet
With sore temptation, and my pulses beat
With bodily desire, and so despair
Half drags me from the path, and makes me fare
Like men whose lips her lips did never greet,—
In such an hour, stand close, and hear my call,
Lighten my darkness and sustain my feet.
Chain me in chains which, if they bruise, control ;
That I may make this sacrifice complete,
Which is, indeed, no sacrifice at all,
Except I yield the body with the soul.

FATE.

God knows I had no hope before she came,
And found me in the darkness, where alone
I sat, even then, and brooded o'er things flown.
She touched my hand, she called me by my name,
She broke my darkness up, and smote with flame
The heights and depths of life, till I was shown
Where possible heavens lay, and things long known
As things transfigured in that light became.
I sought my heaven, her love, at whose white gate,
"Oh ! my beloved, take me in," I cried.
A little while the answer was delayed ;
And then her voice, from out the glory, said :
"Enter ! and be at peace ;" and Fate replied :
"Thy love is strong, but stronger is my hate !"

UNSEEN WORSHIP.

My face is from the world, and set mine eyes
 Upon the sacred image of my past—
 Still as a sculptured saint, whose shade is cast
On some cathedral aisle. Sad music sighs
About its placid silence ; on it lies
 That fleeting light divine, too rare to last,
 Our Wordsworth caught entranced. From sins that
 blast,
No soul to this calm saint for refuge flies ;
 But none of all Christ's votaries, who fall
In mad excess of worship on the rood
 That bears His image crucified, and lay
Their lips in kisses to the sacred wood,
 Have worshipped, as my soul, apart from all,
 Worships unseen, its idol, night and day.

PROPHETIC MOMENTS.

As when one wandering in a wood by night,
Hearing the owls cry down the dark for prey,
Seeing no star to light him on his way,
In those dread moments feels the entire might
Of some great distant grief his whole soul smite
With sickening apprehension of a day,
The fruit of years unborn, till waste and gray
His far life looks in the soul's prophetic sight ;
So sometimes through the horror of my days,
The sights and sounds of ghostly memories,
I stray ; but the mysterious sadness through
My soul is reached by breaths of some high peace ;
Airs from a fair far land I never knew,
A land wherein she walks with Love, and prays.

LOVE'S BIRTH-HOUR.

WHAT was the day when, sweet, I loved thee first?

The day when my heart trembled at thy tone

Almost as much as would my lips have done

Could they have slaked at thine their new-born thirst?

When did this passion into full flower burst,

As a bud into a rose, beneath the sun?

When felt I first, my body and soul as one?

Life with thee bless'd, without thee, empty, and curs'd?

Who notes Love's birth-hour then? In sooth not I;

Though Love like all things hath its birth and growth,

And love at first sight is a short-lived thing;

Nor shall I know the hour when Love must die,

For that will be my death-hour too, and both

Will pass to where is no remembering.

TREASURED THOUGHTS.

If one you loved had tarried 'neath your roof,
And wrought with her sweet fingers many a change,
Would you, when she had left you, disarrange
Her handiwork, the veritable proof
Of her late presence? Nay, for very love
You would not ; but in memory would range
Through rooms her presence had left sweet and strange,
And nought from where she placed it would remove ;
So when she came into my life's dark ways,
Her soul gave many a saving thought to mine,
And all she gave of her abundant grace,
I treasure in my heart, as most divine !
That if we meet again, in far off days,
They may be found, as offerings on a shrine.

HER MESSENGERS.

AND could I think my dreams her messengers,
My dreams wherein she is, should I not say,
Waking upon some desolate new day,
As one who with a chosen friend confers,
She did instruct this chosen dream of hers ;
Hers the sweet mouth that bade it wing its way,
Through lands where dreams and sleeping spirits stray,
And sad lips laugh, and glad eyes fill with tears,
Until it found me ? Did she say, " O dream,
Flying to him as swallows o'er the sea
Fly on to summer, say some tender thing,
Kiss longing lips and eyes, and let him deem
That I awhile am with him bodily,
Nor come back hither, with a broken wing ?"

WASTED SPRING. "

ONCE more, though late, comes back to us the spring !

May's sunbeams waver in the wavering trees,

And leaves and grasses sing in the singing breeze ;

The time hath come for nightingales to sing :

And suddenly, one day in June may bring

From fields wherein 'twere good to lie at ease,

Life-giving, as the perfume of blown seas,

The warm, keen smell of hay bewildering

The sense with its sharp sweetness ; but to-day,

Notes solemn, and sad, and measured, have I heard—

The cuckoo's desolate cry presaging ill,

Telling of falling leaves, cold skies, and gray.

Like the Spring hopeless then, prophetic bird,

Since that one voice eternally is still.

A TERRIBLE SUGGESTION.

If, after all, there should be Heaven and Hell,
 How shall it be with me upon that day,
 When God's voice calls me, and I answer, "Yea,"
 To wait the doom I feel inevitable?
 Shall *He* who made my life most memorable
 Through unexampled sorrow, turn and say,
 "Thy tears, O son, have washed thy guilt away,
 And here within my Heaven shalt thou dwell?"
 Yet even if He said this, and mine eyes
 Met hers again, and saw therein no love,
 Only, instead, a look of sad reproof,
 Should I not stand forlorn in Paradise,
 And being by her spirit unforgiven,
 Sadden the saints, and so unmake God's Heaven?

ARRESTED SPRING.

THE Spring has been here ; thus much, ye can tell ;

Behold these half-unfolded leaves that lie

Upon the path, beneath an ashen sky.

Within these boughs, transfixed as by a spell,

Songless the song-birds sit ; there is a smell

Of Spring about, but that sweet smell shall die,

As streams the west wind freed sink stagnantly,

Because, last night, a blight on all things fell.

What will ye hope, then, in this desolate place ?

Will ye intreat the Winter to make good

His promise ; and with cold and lustrous grace,

Change to a chrysolite the tender bud ?

Not so, all energy that change could bring

Lies mute ; arrested, with the arrested Spring.

AUTUMN QUIET.

THE splendours of the summer time are done,
And, though the roses linger for a space,
Soon will they fade on paths and garden ways.
The russet leaves lie thickly and the sun
Wakes late now and his course is swiftly run.
No passionate summer storm the night dismays
With flame and thunder ; these veiled nights and days
We would not seek, yet, having, hardly shun.
Then said a voice, I knew for Love's—" Even so
May thy life be, dost thou my will and hers—
A passionless existence that shall flow
Like some tamed stream which men have wrought to go
For ever in one course, which no wind stirs
To speed or wreck the burden that it bears ?"

PRAYER.

Oh, Love, behold how steep the path has grown—
Almost too steep for any feet to tread ;
To thee I call, to thee I bow my head.
In solitude with men, but still alone,
My heart hath made perpetually its moan.
Yea, as the living call upon the dead,
Stretching their emptied arms across the bed
Where lies what yesterday they called their own,
So have I called on thee ; but what avails !
Sorrow, grown mad and impious, dominates,
And memory in the darkness sits and wails ;
At every step some foe in ambush waits
To snare my feet. Oh, Love, rise up, awake,
And save me swiftly for thy mercy's sake.

THE ONE GRACE.

I KNOW my strength of singing scant and brief,
Nor can I hope that men my words shall heed
When I, in death, of love have little need.
I have not taught you wisdom out of grief,
And in myself have I had no belief—
Said few wise words and done no worthy deed,
Too faint to follow, powerless to lead—
A helmless vessel dashed from reef to reef.
But if, dear friends, you speak of me at all,
Say in my favour this, and this alone:
That when Love was in her made manifest,
I knew her for my queen, and, leaving all,
Followed the noblest and the loveliest
Until I knelt before her at Love's throne.

MEMORY.

I STOOD once at the gates of Paradise ;
I, even I—who now may chance on hell—
Stood there and heard the things unutterable
Love showeth once to all. And those dear eyes
Looked into mine, and then, as one who sighs,
For joy of peace, I sighed nor broke the spell
By any word. My kisses served to tell
My utter love, her kisses her replies.
Oh, sweet, how sweet, all I had even then,
And great the promise of the years to be.
And must I stand deserted amongst men ?
Nay, not deserted while thy memory,
Oh, love, hath still in its supreme control,
The failing body and the aspiring soul.

LIFE AND DEATH.

How is it then with her ? I think 'tis well ;
 She hath no memory of days that were,
 Her soul is vexed by no importunate prayer.
Love bowed beside her when on sleep she fell,
No wanderer knocketh at her gates to tell
 Of things she would not know. She hath no care
 For any love. Our lives lie waste and bare
Like lands whose losses make them memorable,
And still she heedeth not ; yea verily,
Oh, life and love, if such a thing could be,
 That we for one brief minute should forget,
 She would not sigh or smile to know. And yet,
While life is sad and death is even thus,
Can all be well with her and ill with us ?

JUNE.

OH, June, thou hast too many memories ;
Ghosts walk by daylight 'neath thy steadfast sun—
And people thy warm darkness ; can I shun
These faces of dead joys and pitiless eyes
That look in mine till my pierced spirit cries—
“ Forbear—pass by !” and makes its desolate moan
For pity of its sorrow spent and prone ?
Amid these ghosts my heart lies faint and dies :
Oh, summer twilight, sad beyond all telling,
Oh, nights made once for love, made now for grief !
Come, winter, with thy formidable array
Of frost and storms the gray cold ocean swelling !
Yet wherefore come ? Thou can'st bring no relief ;
Hast thou not too the memories that dismay ?

WHAT PROFITS IT?

ALAS, my God ! what profits it at all—

 The passionate love, the grief, the short-lived bliss,
 The pregnant silence after the long kiss,
The words half uttered and half heard, the fall
Of bitter tears, the long unanswered call
 Of heart to heart, the anguish and the fear ;
 And then the life lived after, chill and drear
As one long winter day when no sun is ;
The hourly strife with unseen enemies,
 The pitiable armistice, and then
The strife resumed ; failures and victories ;
 And yet no rest to either side till when
 Death, that is mightier than the loves of men,
Makes all at once an everlasting peace ?

VAIN DELAY.

IN every thought of comfort I essayed,
 I found some subtle evil, some base thing
 Unclean, most virulent, and sharp to sting.
 Surely too long with these I have delayed;
 Yea, as a child who far from home has strayed
 In some great forest lost and lingering,
 Expectant of the birds that will not sing,
 When night comes on grows terribly afraid
 And cries for home—so seems to me my soul.
 Surely the child returned will no more stray?
 Surely my heart once more in the right way
 Will keep most steadfastly in view its goal?
 Yet cry, lost child, for one to lead thee back;
 And thou, Love, point my soul again its track.

LETHARGIC SORROW.

SURELY to-night some mist hangs on my brain ?

My soul, grown blind, can only grope its way ;

"Yes, thou art desolate"—I hear one say—

"For thee spring's sweetness is all turned to pain,

Art thou not bound and bruised by this, thy chain ?"

"Yea, I am bruised," I answer, in dismay.

Yet now I can recall an ancient lay

Of a poor bard who deemed he loved in vain,

One queenliest of queens ; but she bowed low

And took and loved him for a little space,

Then left him for a far and unknown place,

Where he, for all his longing, might not go.

Now the mist fades, my soul regains its sight,

And all shows plain in the old un pitying light.

DESOLATE LOVE.

I SAW Love sitting by a dry well head,
No crown was on his hair, and in his hand
He had no sceptre but a warrior's brand;
With blood his hands and feet and robes were red,
And ever as he bowed his face he shed
Most bitter tears, and cried, "Where is my land—
And all my subjects that might not withstand
My perfect will and the sweet words I said?
Lo! men have turned from me in these dark days,
The temples that I reared they have cast down."
Then close by his shone out my lady's face,
I saw her bow, and knew she spoke with him,
And when he raised his eyes they were not dim,
And on his hair was glory of a crown.

BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM.

AND if I say I love, and yet forbear
 To do her will, what does my love suffice ?
 Barren it is and all my poems lies.
Yea, though I touch the limit of despair,
And breathe in sorrow as I breathe the air,
 Find the earth waste and gray the sunlit skies,
 A void where once I dreamed of paradise,
A bitter end of every hope and prayer,
 Yet slight her least command, my love is vain—
A pitiful and unregarded thing,
And I unworthy of her fame to sing,
 Too strong to fall, too feeble to attain.
But if I do her will my life shall prove
The depth and glory of her saving love.

THE TWO TEMPTATIONS.

Two met with me upon a weary day.

One said—"I am Love's servant fair to see,

And I have alms which I will give to thee."

But though most fair she seemed, I answered—"Nay,

I serve the master, pass thou on thy way,

For lo ! Love's servant gives no alms to me."

The second cried—"I am Love's enemy

And certes no wise fair ; let me essay

To guide thy steps." "I walk alone," I said.

But he seized hold of both my hands and cried—

"A little come with me, then stand aloof."

Love's foe he is and mine, a false, false guide ;

Yet must I bear with him or bow my head,

Serving Love's servant and betraying Love.

PAST AND PRESENT.

WHEN I conceive of things that might have been,
Of joys that now no God can reinspire
And all the melancholy years require,
I turn my face and front my life unseen.
Stately she was and like an Eastern queen,
Only her soul was as a kindling fire.
She comprehended every heart's desire
And was desire's bound. Oh, matchless mien,
Oh, face of sleeping passion and grave eyes
That grew Love's own when his soul kindled them,
Oh, wide white brows that bore his diadem,
Oh, voice which now no more to mine replies,
Oh, sweet, my love, my own in spite of fate,
Is the lamp quenched, my bride, and am I late ?

THE RIGHT TO LOVE.

"Oh, Love, be merciful to me," I cried,
 "Turn thou, oh, turn to me, my lady's face,"
And, as a dying man for new strength prays,
I prayed to Love and Love's own voice replied—
"The prayer is granted, be thou satisfied."
 Ah me! the pity and glory of those days,
 The lovely, mystic, unfamiliar ways
Of bliss wherein my spirit did abide!
 Ah me! the roar of that dark sea and cold,
The flowerless paths and heavens bereft of light!
 Oh, Love, and oh, my love, I was too bold.
 What right had I thy love to seek or hold?
Yet now Love saith from his unmeasured height—
"Let thy life show thou hadst alone the right."

AFFINITIES.

SOMEWHERE, I do believe—though where, who knows?—

One like my lady dwells. Should I not see,

If I could come upon her suddenly,

The queenly face and eyes whose depths disclose

Passionate rest, great thoughts, and the repose

Of natures wrought for wise sweet mastery?

Yea I do feel, though incommunicably,

That round my life in this life hers yet flows,

And she will read these lays, and all her soul

Will yearn toward me to comfort and sustain.

Others will read to find their truth in vain ;

She only will entirely understand.

Oh, soul twin-born with hers, stretch out thy hand

And lead the pilgrim till he reach the goal.

QUANTUM MUTATUS !

WITH emptied outstretched hands and downcast eyes,
 Love walks alone and walks uncomforted ;
 And if the aureole gleam about his head
 I hardly know ; his lips are full of sighs,
 And they who question him gain no replies.
 Only to me he saith, " My feet have bled
 From many a thorny path, and I have said
 Such grievous words as make the swift tears rise.
 But never since men knew my awful name
 Have I walked thus by such precipitous ways,
 Seen such deep darkness, and illusive flame
 Which leaves no track. Oh, great ancestral days !
 For I am he whose mighty power and peace
 Crowned Helen—consecrated Beatrice."

DREAMING LOVE.

I SAW Love in a strange and hidden place ;
His face was as the face of one who dreams,
Yea, as some weary slumberer's who seems,
By the glad smile which lightens all his face,
To walk once more 'mid old loved country ways,
What time the tender April twilight teems
With songs, and gusts of lilac, and the streams
Run with the sound of wind through some green maze.
Love's hands were folded on his quiet breast.
But lo, a far-off voice called, "Love, arise ;
The night is ended and the dream is done."
Then Love unclosed his fair and mournful eyes,
Took up his staff, and turned him from his rest,
And as he went shone round his path the sun.

LOVE AND DEATH.

"My gracious lady talks with Love," I said,
"Yet hath perchance no thought of me.—Oh, sweet,
See now I put my heart beneath your feet,
Having no crown to set upon your head.
Is the gift too unworthy?" Then Love led
My lady up to me and bade her greet
My lips with hers, that body and soul might meet.
We kissed, we clung together comforted.
"My lady talks with me," I said; "Love's grace
Hath made us now for ever more as one."
My lady turned aside, and lo! one saith,
"Lover, behold thy lady talks with Death."
I turned to clasp my sweet, but in her place
Death towered before me and eclipsed the sun.

LOVE'S SERVANTS.

THERE came to me who cried—"Arise and wake
And follow us, beholding we are Love's—
His chosen ones who haunt his secret groves,
Wherein are streams where thou thy thirst may'st slake ;
Ah ! be well pleased with us thy home to make."

The voice of her who spoke was like a dove's,
When with her tenderest pleading she most moves
Her mate to love in some dim tangled brake ;

A ripe seduction lurked in every curve
Of her lithe body. Then the second spake,
Gayer her tone ; the third, with jeers and cries,
Besought and threatened ; but I closed my eyes,
For these were all Love's servants, for whose sake
Who know not of the master live to serve.

LOVE'S SUFFICIENCY.

IF love is unsufficient, what avails ?

 If love abideth not, then what thing stays ?

 One prayed to wearies as the one who prays,
The exquisite delight of passion fails,

No joy endures, the brightest beauty pales,

 And though to art we give our nights and days,

 We know our brows unworthy of their bays,
Wreckt men whose eyes see visionary sails.

 And is love insufficient, oh, my queen ?

Did we not say, when in love's sweet control

 We stood, each bound to each—"For what hath been
This hour suffices ?" Oh, beloved, see

It hath sufficed. Love's saving memory

Has interposed 'twixt ruin and my soul.

DEAD JOYS.

THE joy in sunset and the large delight
Of rains abundant falling after heat,
The passionate joy it was to break and beat
With strenuous limbs the blown waves warm and white,
The vital peace that fills the summer's night,
The pensive joy, just touched by dreamy pain,
Of autumn twilights when dim woods complain
And the past summer haunts the inward sight ;
The joy of travel and acquaintanceship
With lordly towns and many a sung-of place
Whose names are in man's ear and on his lip—
All these for me are over now and done,
Since that essential life which lit the sun
Death has eclipsed, darkening my lady's face.

THE HIGHER SELF.

THAT higher self her spirit raised in me,
 Pressed in life's fight, desponding shrank away ;
 And then, in irresistible array,
 Threatening to have me in captivity,
 Of tempters came a mighty company.
 Then did I turn myself to Love and pray ;
 Yet still I felt my strength wane day by day,
 And still I said—" Must these have mastery ?"
 And when it seemed, indeed, that I must fail,
 Came back that higher self and shook the door
 Of my shut soul, and smote the tempters down ;
 And said to me—" Does not her love prevail ?
 Is she not one with thee for evermore
 That Death may crown thee with Love's perfect
 crown ?"

A MESSAGE FOR THE OLD YEAR.

SOON shall we have the New Year in his place ;
With empty hands and unexpectant eyes
I sit and ponder while the Old Year dies ;
“ Lo ! from the stainless cold of the first days,
To this most gentle night, through all thy ways
Have I not walked unchanged ? With songs like cries,
Wrung out of sorrow which Love deifies,
I have assailed thee. Now as one who prays,
Hoping for acceptation of his prayer,
I pray thee, dying year, that should'st thou meet,
In that dim place where all our sweet dreams be,
The ghosts of years that knew even her and me,
Thou say how one, forlorn, with weary feet,
Treads the dark path that leads he knows not where.”

A PARABLE.

THERE was a certain man who thought to dwell
 Apart from all in loveless solitude ;
 None roused him or had power to change his mood.
“ Within the world, endowed with many a spell,
A sorcerer, whose name I will not tell,
 Waits me,” he said ; and no man understood.
 So, for long months he dwelt in loneliness,
Nor heeded how the seasons rose or fell.
 He bore with memories—a ghastly throng
That filled his sleepless nights and desolate days.
 But lo ! that sorcerer, subtle as a flame,
 Wound to him hissing forth his awful name.
Then he, the man, so hunted, turned his face
 And sought his kind that they might keep him strong.

LOVE AND SORROW.

Sorrow, of Love begotten, fought with Love
And bruised the mother's breast, and in her ear
Hissed bitter words and base ; then Love had fear.
But still with that rebellious one she strove,
Till Sorrow, seeming humble, sought to move
Love's heart with sophistry, and cried—" Ah, dear !
What can we hope for now ? Behold, quite near
Is many a mystic cave and magic grove,
Wherein we may forget at least one day
Our sad relationship ; fear thou no snare."
So Sorrow, kneeling, prayed her impious prayer.
But mightier was the mother than the child,
Who owned her sin ; and these two, reconciled,
Now help each other on the tedious way.

*CONCERNING THE NEXT BOOK, TO BE
CALLED "THE PILGRIMAGE."*

MORE have I spoken of myself than her.

I feel you do not know my lady yet ;

But those who knew her once may not forget.

I am a pilgrim, no mere wanderer

Upon life's way, and often I confer

With those I would not, but my face is set

Towards that high goal where love and grief are met,

And each becomes the other's minister,

And memorable sorrow makes love memorable.

Then when I have o'ercome the weary way,

I will for you go back to that first day

When first I saw her face, of her to tell,

And make to all a sanctity of pain

For that she was and shall not be again.

A PARABLE.

**THERE was a man who thought to dwell alone
 In a fair house. "My lady sleeps," he said,
 "Resting for ever in the eternal shade ;
 But lo, this place which should have been her own
 I still will keep as hers ; let Memory moan
 'Through sculptured passages for sweet things fled.'
 Only one dwelt with him, around whose head
 The aureole shone, and he for Love was known.
 Then to that house in lamentable estate
 Came wanderers, craving shelter from the cold,
 And these the master pitied for their pain ;
 But spoilers they whom Love at length controlled,
 Scourged and cast forth, and closed in wrath the gate,
 Where now for entrance angels cry in vain.**

PAST SUMMER.

WHEN first the summer time seems gray and cold,
Though sad, we are not hopeless, for we say,
“No summer yet has passed quite cold and gray;
Warm days shall come e'en as they came of old,
Yea, days of bounteous sunlight shall enfold
The longing earth. In paths where now none stray
We yet shall wander, singing by the way,
And though the nightingale long since hath told
Her tale to every green and wind-swept glen,
In sumptuous summer nights we shall repose
'Neath gold-touched leaves that have not lost their green.
But when the darkened summer finds its close—
When we have had such days and nights, 'tis then
We know what may not be by what has been.”

THE UTTERED SOUL.

If God to me had given the heart and brain
Of some musician skilled above the rest,
Her soul in music had been manifest :
Perchance some painter, frenzied to sweet pain
By her deep loveliness, through stress and strain
Of great desire to be through life possessed
Of all that beauty, had been crowned and blessed,
And, spent yet living, seen the light strike plain
Upon her deathless loveliness, and died !
But Music could alone her spirit render ;
Long waves of passionate melody that roll
Wave after wave all tending to one goal,
Pure notes, intense beyond all language tender,
Her soul in music, Music deified !

LOVES QUEST.

LOVE walks with weary feet the upward way,
Love without joy and led by suffering ;
Love's unkissed lips have now no song to sing,
Love's eyes are blind and cannot see the day,
Love walks in utter darkness, and I say :
 " Oh, Love, 'tis summer," or " Behold the spring,"
 Or, " Love, 'tis autumn, and leaves withering,"
And " Now it is the winter bleak and gray,"
And still Love heedeth not. " Oh, Love," I cry,
" Wilt thou not rest ? the path is over steep :"
Love answers not, but passeth all things by ;
Nor will he stay, for those who laugh or weep.
I follow Love who follows Grief ; but lo,
Where the way ends, not Love himself can know.

AND THOU SLEEPEST.

WITH no speech in thy lips, and no light in thine eyes,
Thou liest, and sleepest in sleep so profound,
That my heart when it breaks, and my voice when it
cries,
Doth not vex it with sound.

But my soul, in the depth of its grief, can rejoice
That, for me, but for me, is the anguish of days
That shall know nevermore the too dearly-loved voice,
Nor see the loved face.

The days wax and wane, the stern winter is over,
While, with carols new-born and perfumes that cling,
As a maid, as a lovely compassionate lover,
To earth comes the spring.

Oh, thy sleep is serene, more serene than a sea
Lying under the passionless light of the moon ;
Thou forgettest all raptures that were, and to thee
The night is as noon.

Oh, my love ! my sole love ! oh, thou one best beloved !
Have my songs and my kisses no part in thee now ?
Is thy soul by the storm of my sorrow unmoved ?
Oh, love, is it so ?

My spirit goes back to the day of our meeting,
When thy name was no more than a name to my ears ;
Oh, name so belov'd now, of which the repeating
Brings passionate tears.

Dear name, which, in speaking, the voice would grow
tender,
Name beloved of my voice, as thy face of my sight ;
As my lips of thy lips, wont in kisses to render
Delight for delight.

Now rendered no longer, for kisses are done ;
Embraces are over, glad music played out ;
Our joy was at noon ; now set is the sun,
And night is about.

Yes, night is about me, a night without star,

Blackest night with no moonlight to lighten its gloom,
But here at Love's shrine, where Love's memories are,

My heart makes its tomb !

Memories, pale memories, sad memories that move

All around me, in front of me, go where I will—
Are these ghosts then the all life has left me of love,
Love that heaven could fill ?

Crown'd ghosts of dead queens that, forsaking their
tombs, i

Haunt the groves and the palaces once that were theirs,
Wander weeping through desolate banqueting-rooms,
No festival cheers.

With a great lamentation they fill, day and night,
The fair chambers unpeopled, fair halls that were once
Glad with dancing and melody, flooded with light
Outshining the sun's.

And is this, then, the end of our beautiful dream,
Oh, our dream that was song, and our dream that was
fire ?

Peace lives not for me, and time cannot redeem
My soul from desire ;

From the infinite longing for days that are past,
 When thy hands were in mine, and thy breath on my
 hair,
When I sat at thy feet, and beheld love at last,
 As tender as fair.

Oh ! then, Love he was kind to me, Love that for days
 I had prayed to, and sang of songs bitter to sing,
For I said, " Not for me, not for me is his grace,
 But only his sting."

I reviled him, defiled him, made light of his name,
 Disdained him, profaned him, besought him to cease ;
And, in infinite pity, to pardon he came,
 And said, " Be at peace !"

Of treasures, the rarest he had in his keeping,
 He gave to my soul, and my soul, newly living,
As a spirit awake that too long has been sleeping,
 Confessed him forgiving.

What gift did he give to me ? Who shall declare ?
 The depth of the nature to my nature given,
Will ye fathom the deep sea, and measure the air,
 Or estimate heaven ?

Then I said, "Has He altered, the God of the years,
Who established the darkness no less than the light,
Who controlleth the winds, and unfailingly bears
The day to the night?"

He bids kingdoms arise, He appeaseth the wars ;
The storms work His will which the thunder proclaims ;
He spreads out the heavens, and lights them with stars
Which He calls by their names.

Cried the soul of the Psalmist in sorrowful strength,
"Hath God to be gracious forgotten?" I said,
"He has pitied our long lamentations at length :
His anger has fled."

"Ah ! His mercy endureth for ever," you say.
Not His mercy, but wrath, for no mercy He hath ;
For as slayers stand full in the path of their prey,
Stood Death in Love's path.

Then Love clasped all her joys and her visions of peace,
As the mother her babe in her bosom would hide
When avengers draw near, and in terror she sees
The foe on each side.

AND THOU SLEEPEST.

141

And this life now is mine, love, to use as I will ;
If I ruin my soul, will thy sweetness reprove me ?
If with glory the days of my life I should fill,
Would that, my love, move thee ?

If I come from the battle defeated and weak,
Will thy tenderness lull, and take sting from defeat ?
If I triumph, will pride in thy voice, on thy cheek,
Make triumph more sweet ?

Let me lose, let me win, there is work to be done,
Mighty battles to fight, fierce conventions to slay,
Ere the glorious battle of freedom be won,
And Right has her way.

But for me, not for me, is the conqueror's crown,
Nor the grave of the fallen ; I share in no strife ;
I have buried my dreams ; by my dreams I sit down,
And watch out my life.

And thou sleepest, beloved, and thy rest is so deep,
That no dream comes to mar thy enduring repose ;
I, too, at the end, after sorrow shall sleep,
Hands fold, and eyes close.

Pale the realm that I look for, and bloomless and still ;

Love leads me, but Love shall relinquish my hand,
When I pass the dark portals, nor shrink at the chill
Of the summerless land.

A land without song, and a land without light ;

But the angels, that stand in its gateways, can hear
A sound of lamenting that comes day and night
Through the colourless air,

The crying of mourners who weep as they come ;

And the wind brings a sound of their weeping before,
But they gain it, the land where all voices are dumb ;
Then, they weep nevermore !

And thou sleepest as they ; as thou sleepest, shall I ;

I shall not remember, I shall not forecast ;
Shall feel not, shall see not, shall know not, but lie
Asleep at the last.

AFTER:

I.

A LITTLE time for laughter,
A little time to sing,
A little time to kiss and cling,
And no more kissing after. ,

II.

A little while for scheming
Love's unperfected schemes ;
A little time for golden dreams,
Then no more any dreaming.

III.

A little while 'twas given
To me to have thy love ;
Now, like a ghost, alone I move
About a ruined heaven.

AFTER.

IV.

A little time for speaking,
Things sweet to say and hear ;
A time to seek, and find thee near,
Then no more any seeking.

V.

A little time for saying
Words the heart breaks to say ;
A short, sharp time wherein to pray,
Then no more need for praying ;

VI.

But long, long years to weep in,
And comprehend the whole
Great grief that desolates the soul,
And eternity to sleep in.

DE PROFUNDIIS.

I HAVE no strength at all, Love, save through thee—
Man helps me not, and God, if God there be,
Has turned His face in anger ; help me then,
Oh thou who governest the lives of men !
I have blasphemed against thy name, and said,
“ Love is as other gods, a god to dread,
A lovely, uncompassionating god,
A god who scourges with a fiery rod,
A wrathful god, who desolates our years,
Filling the breast with sighs, the eyes with tears,
Hot, bitter, blinding tears that bring no ease.”
Such things I said ; yea, bitterer things than these,
But never said thou wast not, or denied
In any way thy godhead. I had died

Before thee, speaking impious things and base,
Hadst thou not turned a favourable face,
Hadst thou not raised me up, and bade me see,
In her I worship, thy divinity.
Oh, Love ! from whom no secret thought is hidden,
Thou knowest well how bitterly, self-chidden,
I fall before thee in my heart, and cry,
Love, save me, or I perish ! Life goes by,
Each day the thing I would not, that I do,
Because I am so worthless. Oh, renew
A righteous spirit in me. Let me say,
When life and all sad memories turn away,
As least, I am more worthy ; if we meet
In any unknown kingdom, strange and sweet,
I shall not turn my face, as if in shame,
But answer, when she calls me by my name,
And tell her, how not all in vain I strove
To keep my whole life stainless for her love.
Oh, Love ! I do conjure thee, by her grace,
By all the anguish of a last embrace,
To keep me in the way that I would go,
To give me strength to conquer, and to show

Her glory in my life, till all men see
What love can do for love. Love, strengthen me !
What man another's thoughts shall understand ?
I am become an alien in the land.
I am like those who hear not, and as one
Who, being blind, discerneth not the sun.
I am like one whose lips were sealed from birth,
And like a man who falleth to the earth
Because his strength is wasted utterly ;
But breathe thou on my eyes, and I shall see ;
Unclose my ears, and I shall hear ; unseal
My lips, and let me with my mouth reveal
Thy wondrous works. Increase my strength withal,
That I may walk uprightly, and not fall ;
Fall not, nor stumble, though the way be long,
Led by thy hand, and in thy strength made strong.
Thou gavest, and Death took ; and I am left,
Of every joy and every hope bereft,
Save this—of being able, at the last,
To look unshamed upon a bitter past.
My sorrow is not hidden from thy sight ;
Have I not called upon thee in the night,

And in the day ? "Love, Love !" have I not cried,
And hast thou not from thy far heaven replied ?
Yea, thou hast answered me, and said, "Be strong !
Perchance, the way is not so very long ;
Oh, son, be firm, and I will send thee aid.
Have I not heard, and wilt thou be afraid ?"
Oh, Love ! make haste to help me, or I fall ;
Without thy aid, I cannot strive at all.
I shall be trodden under foot, and shamed,
Whenever with my name her own is named.
'Tis knowledge of thy laws for which I pant,
Oh, teach me, thou, to keep thy covenant.
Men fall from thee by reason of their grief,
And think that other gods can grant relief.
Thou art the only god compassionate,
Oh, give me strength and patience, Love, to wait.
We know not what comes after death, but trust
That no fresh sorrow quickeneth in the dust.
No man can tell for certain what shall be ;
Death lies before us like a sombre sea ;
It may be, land is on the farther side,
But none come back across the awful tide

To bear us revelation. We must stand,
And watch the dark waves mounting up the strand.
Thou couldst not keep them from her ; did she go
As one who trembles, and holds back ? Not so,
Thy light was in her heart, thy saving grace
Made lovelier, even, that divinest face :
She preached thy gospel ; through her life I came
To comprehend the glory of thy name.
Now by the joy that was, and grief that is,
By every sacred unforgotten kiss,
By all the bitterness of unshed tears,
Help me to bear the burden of the years ;
Give me fresh courage, and sustain my soul ;
Purge me of all uncleanness, make me whole,
That I may show thy wonders fitly then,
Glory to thee, oh Love, in all. Amen.

BEFORE SLEEPING.

WHEN I sleep, Love, be thou near ;

Let me hear

In my heart thy voice, and say,

“All the day

I have done thy will and hers.”

Sleep confers

Many blessings ; but, to me,

What shall be

Half as sweet as dreamless rest ?

That is best !

If she come in any dream,

And I seem

To embrace her while I cry,

“Thou and I

BEFORE SLEEPING.

151

Are together once again,"
How the pain
Of awakening should I bear ?
Oh, Love, hear.
Keep all evil dreams away ;
Only say,
" By thy side my watch I keep,
Sleep, son, sleep !"

WASTED.

I WOULD it were done with and over,
This life with no goal,
That bountiful darkness might cover,
My body and soul.

I'm weary of living and loving,
I'm weary of strife ;
Of shadows incessantly moving
In light of my life.

I'm weary of night-time and day-time,
Of things that go by ;
I'm weary of winter and May-time,
The sea, and the sky.

I look to the rest that comes after
The peace that endures ;
Of a land wherein tears are as laughter,
And no love allures.

By no thought of a lady beloved,
But never possessed ;
Is the spirit again ever moved
When lost in that rest ?

On that day when you bid me farewell,
And no word I say ;
You may bow yourselves o'er me, and tell
Of times gone away.

You may show me her portrait, and lay it
Here, just on my heart ;
The poem she said, ye may say it,
And I shall not start.

You may say that she loved not at all,
Or loved overmuch ;
You may say, " If love held them in thrall,
We knew not of such.

"Had he striven, and lived long enough,
This thing had not been ;
We had found him another fair love,
To be his soul's queen."

I shall not assent nor deny,
Say, do what you will
On that day when I bid you good-bye,
And my heart becomes still.

Oh ! my love, in whose love I abided,
Whose soul, like a star,
Shone out from the distance, and guided
My life from afar,

Having lived out my life for thee solely,
Renounced all for thee ;
The death which I die shall be holy
And gracious to me.

Oh, most beautiful, languishing face !
Oh, peaceful gray eyes !
That beheld with prophetic gaze
The shadows that rise

'Twixt spirits that life could not sever,
Death only divide :
Taking one where the lovers meet never,
Nor bridegroom claims bride.

It is sweet through the wintry hours,
When thick the snow lies ;
To think of warm airs, and fair flowers,
Green fields, and clear skies.

'Tis sad when the summer is dying,
And nights become chill ;
To think how the snow shall be lying
On valley and hill.

'Tis sweet for the lovers that sunder,
If but for a day,
To think of their meeting, and wonder
What words each shall say.

So, my love, through these hours of sorrow,
How peaceful it seems,
Awaiting the night without morrow,
The sleep without dreams.

On that day when Death bids me arise,
No longer to grieve ;
I shall follow, nor look with sad eyes
On things that I leave:

I shall sleep, and forget altogether
Your voice and your face ;
The passionate, splendid June weather,
Long nights, and long days

Will come, and I shall not awaken
To think of the night,
The June night, when my soul was first shaken,
And thrilled by love's might.

Yet I see it so clearly to-day,
That night when I loved ;
I remember the tree-covered way,
The sound as you moved,

Of your robes sweeping over the grass,
The sound of your voice,
Oh, my love, my own love, let them pass,
These ghosts of dead joys.

Oh, Death ! let me join them, and follow

Where no sorrows thrill ;

Where to chambers all silent and hollow,

Comes nought that is ill ;

Comes nought that is lovely or gracious,

Comes nought that can move ;

The chamber, though narrow, is spacious

And lofty enough

For the tenant who lies without motion,

Mere ashes and dust ;

Released from all sense of emotion,—

So, Lord, do we trust ;

We trust, that is all ; but who, living,

Hath knowledge to say,

What gifts we may have of God's giving,

When life's put away ?

Who can say, after all, we shall sleep ?

I may find death is vain ;

I may wake to remember, and weep

To feel the old pain .

As fresh in my spirit as ever,
To long for love's joys—
For the music that comes again, never,
The sound of your voice ;

For the passionate lips that could thrill me,
The beat of the breast ;
The peace of the soul that could still me,
And wrap me in rest.

Shall I thirst for old touches and kisses ?
Ah ! what shall I see ?
Shall that possible life be as this is,
Or worse, it may be ?

We may rove, being dead, through gray places,
With twilight above ;
Worn ghosts with pale, hungering faces,
Souls yearning for love,

In lands where the wind never ranges,
The light never veers ;
A kingdom that knows not of changes
Through infinite years.

There, Dante, stern-featured, may wander
With sorrow suppressed ;
And look o'er gray seas, and say, "Yonder,
My queen does she rest ?

"Or moves she as I among shadows,
And sighs, ' We were wrong ;
Are these then the heavenly meadows
Proclaimed in thy song ? "

I may long, as I now long for quiet,
For trouble and strife,
The discord, the fever, and riot
Of actual life.

Any sound that should free for a minute
My soul from that sound
Of a voice with my heart's music in it,
A voice that I found

Surpassing all Fancy invented,
A voice, the heart's cry,
A voice, wherein Laughter repented,
And failed in a sigh.

In the utter, eternal dismay
Of life never stirred,
Time may seem like one petrified day,
Transfixed at God's word.

But all this is barren of reason,
And useless as prayers ;
We must live on, and wait for Death's season,
To know what it bears. .

AT A WINDOW.

THIS is the window at which she read,
 That day in June when the heat mists rose,
 Veiling the light of the sun o'erhead,

The poem, my heart the loveliest knows:
 And here I sat near her feet, and fed
 My heart with th' exquisite present, and said,
 "The future may give, it may take away,
 But she, she is with me one whole June day."

She read, I listened, and oft there came
 The roses' scent from the paths below ;
 My lips inaudibly named her name,
 And, so great did the passionate worship grow,
 It seemed I must weep to quench the flame,
 Kindling and thrilling the blood of my frame ;

When her voice in compassionate music folded
The thoughts my heart to its longings moulded.

And here, one twilight in summer, too,
I, who had dreamed of her all the day,
Hearing the exquisite voice come through
The music of Nature, striving to say
A part of my love in lays I knew
That her spirit should one day own for true,
Was suddenly rapturously made aware
That she I dreamed of was with me there.

She bade me tell her my rhymes, and so
I told them over, her mood to please ;
My heart was full, and my voice was low,
I knew she would speak, when my voice should cease ;
She spoke : one minute I seemed to know,
All my life might be, if her life could flow
As one with mine, till the end were attained,
All grief and joy done with, the great rest gained.

And here I sit by myself to-night,
Utterly lonely, hopeless of heaven,
Hearing no voice, discerning no light.
Was not my life and my life's love given

Into her keeping, my sole delight?
And now she is far out of reach, out of sight,
What deed shall I do, what word shall I say?
What song shall I sing, and what prayer shall I pray?

“Dream thou no dream, though thy sleep be long,”

To her I will say, “sleep fast, and well,
I—I will turn from the great world’s wrong,
Henceforward, alone with my grief to dwell.

I will pray to Love, I will sing a song,
That love shall keep pure, and passion make strong,
And the song thus born of my love shall be,
The star of my lady’s divinity.”

HOPE AND MEMORY.

HERE Hope, with strenuous wings that shone like fire,
Drew after, in his flight, a love's desire ;
And here gaunt Fear snatched at Hope's shining wing,
And plucked it back, and held it fluttering ;
Here with the sound of wind and wash of waves,
Came tones and glimpses of the love that saves ;
The place is still the same—this place whereto
I brought the dream one lady's face came through.
Oh, guardian cliffs, and thou, enduring sea,
Once part of Hope as now of Memory,
Hope, which accomplished, all lies cold and dead,
While Grief and Memory take hands and wed.
They walk where phantom feet and faces pass,
They speak of Hope that was, of Joy that was ;
Unknowing and unknown alone they move,
Sad and undying ministers of Love.

THE SEASON'S ASSOCIATIONS.

Soft white wings in a whirling wind,
Shivering trees, and sad gray skies,
Bitter kisses and long, long sighs,
Eyes by passionate tears made blind,
A fire of hope that but waxed and waned,
Words that soothed, and words that pained,
And hot strange light in the aching eyes.

Waters flashing beneath the sun,
Songs of birds, and the scent of May,
Grief for a loved one far away,
Pain of a hope that is all but done,
A thought of meeting bitter as sweet,
Lips that by night in dreams repeat
The one sad prayer they have left to pray.

Breathless heavens and blinding noons,
Friends that loiter 'neath garden trees
Two together, a sense of peace,
Long still nights and the great sweet moons,
Love victorious crowned at last,
Bliss exalted and grief downcast,
And a calm as deep as of summer seas.

Dead leaves drifting down garden ways,
Fear in place of a fair delight,
Wind and rain through the day and night,
Hands outstretched, and a half-turned face,
Words from lips that will soon be still,
Hopes that cower and thoughts that kill,
And death that triumphs in love's despite.

A DREAM.

I DREAMT I sat one evening all alone,
In chambers haunted by old memories,
No hope of star, or memory of sun
Lightened the grayness of the autumn skies,
My heart was full of sorrow, great and keen,
For there my Love one year with me had been ;
There first my soul confessed her for its queen,
There had we mixed our kisses and our sighs,
There first to me her inmost heart was shown.

The wind outside was sweeping from the trees
Their few remaining leaves, as in some hall,
Where men have late held great festivities,
One plucks the faded glories from the wall,

And this was all I saw, and all I heard
Was sad protracted moaning of the wind,
And piteous crying of some twilight bird,
That came a nest in leafless boughs to find.
"Oh, false, false voice," I said, and turned away,
And shut the door upon the dying day,
And in the evening, desolate and gray,
Sat still as one whom sorrow maketh blind,
And in the silence with my heart conferred.
And as I sat, I heard that voice again,
And "Lo !" it cried, "be not discomfited,
Knocks she so loud, and calls she so in vain?
Go forth once more, and call, nor be afraid
Of any fresh disaster. Heavenly state
She leaves for thee, and at thy very gate,
Worn in the wind **and** twilight, doth she wait."
"I have no hope, for all thy words," I said,
"And yet I could **not**, if I would, refrain."
Then, as a man **who**, being near to die,
Knowing men **cannot** save him, turns his face,
And calls on God, in his extremity,
To lengthen yet **a little** while his days,

Because the giver of the feast lies dead,
And those for whom the festal board was spread
Stand with sad faces round his silent bed,
And all the lamps that lit the festival
Untended burn and in the daylight cease.

Then suddenly I heard a voice, and lo !
That voice was like the wind's voice having speech,
It said to me, " Rise up, dost thou not know
Thy lady waits outside, and doth beseech
For entrance ; shall she cry and thou not hear ?"
I looked, but saw no living creature near,
Only that voice kept whispering in my ear,
" She calls to thee, to thee her hands outreach,
Lo, by thy name she calls thee even now !"

I made no answer, but flung open wide
The door, and faced the light with eager eyes ;
I called her name with all my strength, I cried
On that beloved name, as one who tries
To make men hear when in vext sleep he seems
To fly from pale avenging forms, and deems
He sleeps, but cannot waken from his dreams ;
I looked, and saw above the sad gray skies,
And the gaunt poplars standing either side.

And this was all I saw, and all I heard
Was sad protracted moaning of the wind,
And piteous crying of some twilight bird,
That came a nest in leafless boughs to find.
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“And yet I could not, if I would, refrain.”

Then, as a man who, being near to die,
Knowing men cannot save him, turns his face,
And calls on God, in his extremity,
To lengthen yet a little while his days,

And, calling, feels withal he calls in vain,
So by her name I called her once again,
Then listened, and I heard the rush of rain,
 And sweep of winds down leaf-strewn garden ways ;
I saw the blown clouds hurrying through the sky.

I looked, and listened, but no answer came,
 No form or phantom stood beside the door,
Only the wind, in moaning, moaned her name,
 Only my footsteps echoed on the floor ;
And now the daylight died and darkness fell.
I did not know I dreamed, and yet the spell
Of dreaming seemed upon me ; who shall tell
 If dreams are only dreams, or something more ?
Who lights the depths of sleep with any flame ?

And now that voice was silent ; so I thought
 It is no voice at all that I have heard ;
And now the wind and rain together wrought
 Wild sounds, and sweet, wherewith the night was stirred.
The hours bore on their dark and destined course ;
Glad hearts and sad hearts slumbered, and the source
Of joy flowed on unnoticed, and the force
 Of grief was felt not ; but my heart recurred
To that strange voice, whose tones the wind had caught.

Then, as I sat and pondered, suddenly
In exultation woke again that voice ;
It cried, " Rise up, go forth, for verily
Thy love, she waits to clasp thee ! hope decoys,
And men grow sick of hope, but this is truth ;
Thy kiss shall warm anew her cold sweet mouth ;
She left thee, but she kept with thee her troth,
And now she comes from very far to thee,
And brings thee back with increase all thy joys."

Stung by those words, I could but count as vain,
I flung the door back as in last disproof,
And there withal rushed in the wind and rain
And there I saw the bleak night's starless roof,
And there and then I heard a voice divine,
And there two cold sweet hands took hold of mine,
And there a stormy star shone out for sign ;
But all things were accomplished. " Oh, my Love,
Meet we so even in my dreams again !"

I brought her in, and hardly could believe
For joy what was ; I know I could not speak,
I know I wept, yet not as those who grieve,
I know her breath and lips were on my cheek,

I know I could not for a little space
Lift up my eyes and look upon her face ;
I know at last we met in wild embrace,

I know I felt her lips to my lips cleave,
And how I fell by joy's excess made weak ;

And how my hands were fain her hair to stroke,
Soft hair and bright, and how she bowed, and said—
And these, I think, were the first words she spoke—

“ Oh, Love, lay back upon my breast thy head,
Great love alone is changeless amid change ;
Love hath the entire universe to range,
And hearts that love even death cannot estrange.”

At that word,—death, afresh the old wounds bled ;
I turned to clasp her once again, and woke.

And long I pondered on the dream gone by,

As men will ponder on an ancient scroll
That holds the key to some great mystery,

Whose hidden meaning they would fain unroll.
Then said a voice unto me, without sound,
“ So may the hope, long sought and never found,
Come when the last great darkness closes round—

Come, and be apprehended by thy soul,
That thou mayst say, ‘ So meet we, she and I.’ ”

TO CICELY NARNEY MARSTON.

A BROTHER'S TRIBUTE.

WHAT were I, dear, without thee ? Let me look
Back on my earliest days, to-night, as he
Who, having thoroughly read through some book,
Re-reads the opening pages lovingly.
In days when we were children, who but I
Should know how thy soul turned from tender things,
How thy girl's heart would girlish joys put by,
To share the boy's uncouth imaginings ?

If then those days were sweet, who more than thou,
Made them so fair, blending thy life with mine ?
What books we read together, then, as now !—
Books that boys love, full of sea-winds and brine ;

Do you remember that pet place of ours
 We called our haunt? Not beautiful it was,
 Not musical with birds, nor gay with flowers,
 But from it we could watch the mad trains pass,

Whirling to places that we knew not of.
 Some vision in its smoke we must have seen ;
 Heard music in its voice, now shrill, now rough,
 Or, there, our wanderings not so oft had been.
 Oh ! days wherein all songs of birds were sweet,—
 The birds that mock us now with boisterous mirth ;
 Days when we laughed for joy of summer-heat,
 Nor laughed less well when snow made white the earth !

Ah ! precious days we knew not how to prize !
 If they were slighted then, 'tis now their turn
 To slight, and look from sad, reproachful eyes ;
 To whisper with white lips,—“ In vain you yearn ;
 You longed for other days, and they are come ;
 Now, you look back ; so, Dives, deep in Hell,
 In torture looked at Lazarus, where, at home,
 He lay in Abraham's broad bosom.—Well,

"A gulf as deep is set 'twixt us and you,
We cannot give you back the dream, the peace."
Alas ! we know their cruel words are true ;
We never can re-capture one of these.
Did we not share our sorrows and our joys
In later years, when we awoke, to find
Passion and sorrow in the deep sea's voice,
A mighty mystery saddening all the wind ?

Have we not loved the sea together, dear ?
Not as they love who come one hour a day,
To breathe its life, and then come not too near,
Lest the waves take them in the face with spray ;
But, when the July sun through waste blue skies,
Declared the summer in her majesty ;
When no sweet air, like a divine surprise,
Came up from the scarce-stirring, breathing sea,

Yea, when the heat a fiery scourge became,
And myriad shafts of sunlight charged the main,
In all that soundless violence of flame
That made the shore one charr'd and smoking plain,

176 *TO CICELY NARNEY MARSTON.*

We did not fail at all ! our eyes could pierce
 Between the blinding air and steaming beach,
To where, weighed on by summer, fair and fierce,
 , The sea lay tranced in bliss too deep for speech.

Oh, silent glory of the summer day !

 How, then, we watched with glad and indolent eyes
The white-sailed ships dream on their shining way,
 Till, fading, they were mingled with the skies.
Have we not watched her, too, on nights that steep
 The soul in peace of moonlight, softly move
As a most passionate maiden, who in sleep
 Laughs low, and tosses in a dream of love ?

And when the heat broke up, and in its place,
 Came the strong, shouting days and nights, that run,
All white with stars, across the labouring ways
 Of billows warm with storm, instead of sun,
In gray and desolate twilights, when no feet
 Save ours might dare the shore, did we not come
Through winds that all in vain against us beat
 Until we had the warm sweet-smelling foam

Full in our faces, and the frantic wind
Shrieked round us, and our cheeks grew numb, then
warm,

Until we felt our souls, no more confined,
Mix with the waves, and strain against the storm ?
Oh ! the immense, illimitable delight

It is, to stand by some tempestuous bay,
What time the great sea waxes warm and white,
And beats and blinds the following wind with spray !

Have we not loved our France together ? yea,
More than our northern mother, be it said,
For there, oh, fuller is the life of Day,
And all the earth seems sweeter to our tread :
We always grieved to leave her, always laughed
For mere delight to see her face once more,
Tasting as wine the stainless airs that waft
The sea-scents to the odours of the shore.

And we together have seen Italy,
In kingly Genoa our steps have strayed,
And wandered by the famed and tideless sea ;
Through Florence, in all loveliness arrayed,

178 *TO CICELY NARNEY MARSTON.*

Pure as a virgin, regal as a queen,
 Made great by many memories—a place
To see and die, contented having seen !
 Have we not worshipped her ? Oh, nights and days !

Unlike our English nights and days, for there
 Each day's a sumptuous summer, and each night
A large and passionate caress of air,
 And Heaven grows one with Florence in God's sight !
And Venice we shall not forget, I deem ;
 Ah me ! the night we gained her, and you said,
"Weird as a city vision'd in a dream !"
 The winding watery streets before us spread ;

On either side we saw the houses stand
 Mystic and dark ! Of them I yearned to sing ;
You said, "They seem built by no mortal hand,
 Yet wear a look of human suffering !"
And then I knew my song might not avail
 More than those words to compass ; and that we,
When most remember'd things with Time turn pale,
 Should catch those houses rising from the sea !

Oh, in what things have we not been as one ?
Oh, more than any sister ever was
To any brother ! Ere my days be done,
And this my little strength of singing pass,
I would these failing lines of mine might show
All thou hast been, as well as all thou art.
And yet what need ? for all who meet thee, know
Thy queenliness of intellect and heart.

Oh, dear companion in the land of thought,
How often hast thou led me by thy voice,
Through paths where men not all in vain have sought
For consolation, when their cherished joys
Lie dead before them, never more to rise,
And sing their souls to sleep, or in some place,
Busy with all life's work, with sudden eyes
To flash upon them, till a rapturous space

Their souls yearn up, and lo ! the lover sees
His lady's face, where folded in love's calm
She waits at sunset 'neath her garden trees,
Till they stand mouth to mouth, and palm to palm.

180 *TO CICELY NARNEY MARSTON.*

Now ebbs my song from thee, but as a waif
The tide, receding, leaves upon the beach,
So, even this, my song's retreating wave,
Leaves my soul nearer thine. Oh! poor vain speech

That fails so sadly when the heart o'erflows !
Yet love me, dear, a little, for love's sake.
Shine thou upon my spirit till it grows
Not all unlovely. If my life could take
Colour from thy life, I might learn to live,
With no joy come to fruit ; perceiving this,
It is not what we take, but what we give,
That brings the peace more durable than bliss.

Bear with me, dear, a little longer yet ;
Forsake me not, if I forsaken stand.
Remember me ! when others shall forget ;
Thy love to me is as thy precious hand
Might be upon my forehead if it burned
In Hell, of some last fever ; hold me fast,
Oh thou to whom in joy's full noon I turned
As now I turn, the glory being past.

THE END.

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[NOVEMBER, 1874.]



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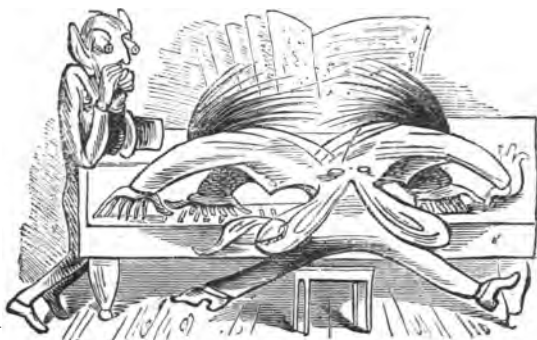
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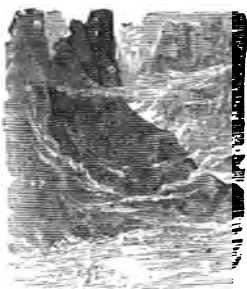
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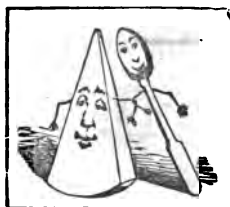
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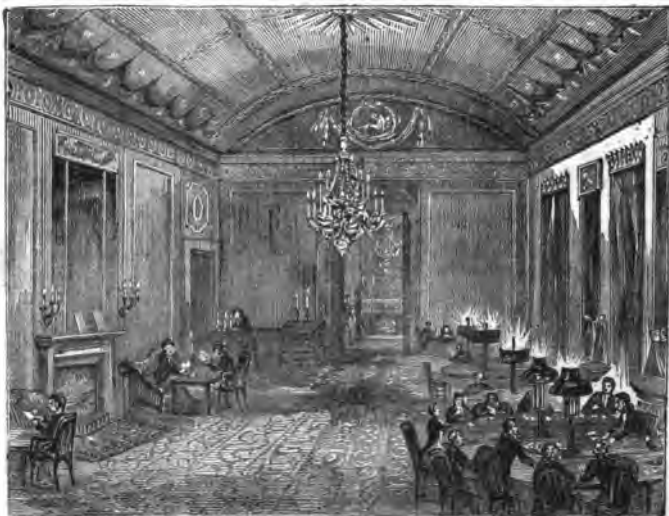
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